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March 15th

W. C. TUTTLE · J. ALLAN DUNN · TALBOT MUNDY
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A New Hashknife Novelette

The CROSS-

HASHKNIFE HARTLEY and Sleepy Stevens came down the creaking old stairway of the Empire Hotel, flung their warbags on the floor beside the doorway and looked out at the deserted street. It was early morning in Cobalto. Far across the eastern range the sky showed a streak of gold and rose, presaging the coming of another hot day.

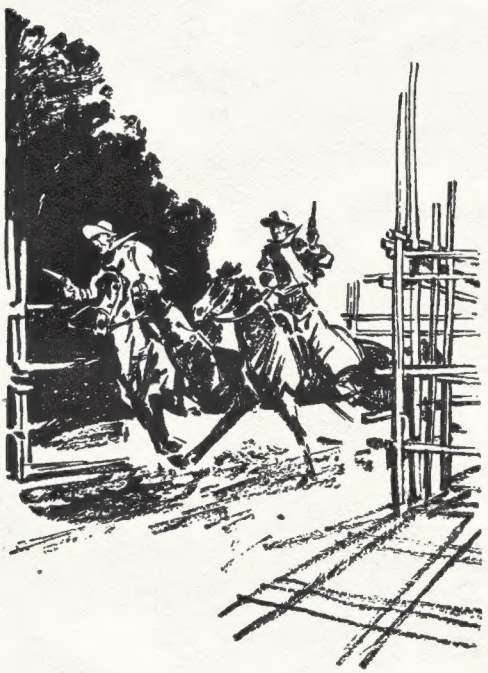
Hashknife Hartley stretched his six feet, five inches of whipcord muscles, yawned wearily and brushed a lock of roan colored hair away from his keen gray eyes. His face was long, lean, deeply lined and tanned, with a generous nose and a wide, thin lipped mouth.

His overalls, tucked in the tops of his high heeled boots, fitted like the skin on a sausage, but sagged low on his lean hips. His shirt, once blue, but faded from many washings, fitted almost as snugly as his overalls. Over the shirt he wore a stringy vest. In lieu of a necktie he wore a closely tied black silk handkerchief, and on top of his head he wore an old black Stetson, which had shed rain on many cattle ranges.

Sleepy was short and blocky, with a humorous mouth and wide blue eyes almost hidden in a nest of grin wrinkles. In garb he was about on a par with

By W. C. TUTTLE

*in-a-*BOX MYSTERY



Hashknife, except that his sombrero was of a soiled tan and his neckerchief a glaring red.

"There wasn't no use stayin' in bed," said Hashknife. "You can't blame me for what that alarm clock done, Sleepy. That feller said that if we'd set it at three o'clock it would go off at ten minutes after five. So you got scientific and set it at half-past three."

"And the damn thing went off at half-past four!" snorted Sleepy.

They looked at each other and laughed foolishly.

"I reckon we might as well go find some breakfast," suggested Hashknife. "That Dancin' City stage won't leave for an hour."

"All right. That's a funny name for a town—Dancin' City."

"I asked a feller about it," said Hashknife. "He said that years ago it was a spot where the Injuns used to meet to hold dances. I hate to think of ridin' all the way up there on a stage, but it's the only thing to do. Didja notice the reward notices they've got posted up around here?"

"For that mail robbery?" queried Sleepy. "Yeah, I read 'em. I asked a feller down at the pool hall about it, and he said they never got anythin' worth stealin'. Let's go find the food."

They went down the street, where the odors of frying bacon and eggs drew them into a little Chinese café. A stolid faced Oriental took their order. Sleepy yawned wearily and rested his face on one hand, his elbow sprawled across the table.

"I dunno," he said. "It looks to me like a wild goose chase. Most of them old prospectors are either loco or the biggest liars on earth."

"He says he brought gold out with him," said Hashknife.

He reached in his pocket and drew out a crumpled, much thumbed letter, which he spread out on the dirty tablecloth. The letter read:

Dear Hashknife.

Im writin you in care of Jimy Wells and hope he knos were you are. I aint forgot

you save my life and I need some help so I tell you I found the lost jackas mine. Enyhow I think I hav. Its as rich as hell and its in a hell of a plase all lavy and no water and youd go loco. I bring enuf to cash in and Im bein watched by some which would kill me to find this mine. You and Slepy come and help me and we go shares but hury up. I trust you.

Yor Obedent servnt
—J. WOODS

"And there you are," said Hashknife as he folded the letter. "It's worth a chance, Sleepy. With our pockets lined with gold we could quit roamin' around all over creation. Lots of good clothes, eat regular, mebbe travel across the ocean—and be somebody."

"You paint a picture, cowboy," sighed Sleepy.

"We'd be rid of cow ranges, Sleepy. Sleep between sheets every night, take baths and have clean clothes. No more pilin' out at daybreak to swap warm blankets for a cold jawed bucker. No more fightin'. Why, we could forget that we ever ate alkali with a trail herd."

The Chinaman brought their breakfast. Sleepy started to draw his knife across two fried eggs, paused and looked seriously at Hashknife.

"You know what I hope, Hashknife?" he asked.

"What do you hope?"

"I hope old Jim Woods is a damn liar."

Hashknife's gray eyes laughed, but his mouth was serious.

"Don'tcha want to be rich?" he asked.

"When I get too danged old to be anythin' else."

"Same here," said Hashknife softly. "It must be a handicap."

They finished their breakfast and went up to the stage station. The stage, a big clumsy affair, built to stand the rough road, was being loaded by the driver and a helper. The driver was a hulking sort of person, badly in need of a shave and haircut, one side of his face bulging from a generous supply of tobacco.

"You fellers goin' to Dancin' City?" he asked.

"If them six horses don't lay down and die on the road," said Hashknife. "What do you feed 'em—sawdust?"

"Them horses eat oats all the time, pardner."

"I'll betcha you tie a string on it."

"Tie a string on what?"

"The oat you feed to 'em; and yank it away. When do we start?"

"Pretty quick. I'm waitin' for a lady passenger. I reckon she's the new school teacher for Dancin' City."

"Lemme ride with you," urged Sleepy. "All my life I've—"

"Pardon me," said a lady's voice, "but how do I get up to the seat?"

Sleepy turned quickly and took a sharp look at the lady.

"You ride with the driver, Hashknife," he said. "I'll help the lady up to the back seat."

The girl was plainly but neatly dressed, and not at all the type of school teacher who might bury herself in a place like Dancing City. She was possibly twenty years of age, with clean cut features, large gray eyes and a pleasant smile.

She thanked Sleepy for his assistance, and he climbed up beside her, ignoring Hashknife's grin. There were no introductions. The lady did not open the conversation, and Sleepy was content to steal an occasional glance at her profile.

The distance to Dancing City was forty miles, and nearly every foot of the road was upgrade. The driver told them that there would be another relay of six horses at the Halfway House, where the noon meal would be served.

THE first twenty miles of that journey was a good test of equine and human endurance. The narrow road, deep in sand and dust, seemed to follow the lines of least resistance, circling interminably through the desert hills.

The driver, his vocal cords worn to a frazzle from yelling at his team, was no conversationalist. The girl covered her face with a heavy veil to keep out

the dust and clung to the rocking seat with both hands.

They were all thankful when they reached the Halfway House, where there were shade trees and cool water. In the cool adobe dining room was an old, bewhiskered prospector, arguing with the proprietor. They had probably absorbed a few drinks, and it was evident that the prospector was just a little deaf.

"I tell you, I don't know anythin' about him," said the proprietor. "I keep a-tellin' you, Whisperin', but you don't hear good. I ain't got no idea where Cloudy is, and I don't care where he is."

"What'd you say?" asked the deaf one.

The proprietor turned to see the guests, counted them quickly and hurried out to the kitchen. The driver came in carrying a case of canned fruit.

"Hyah, Whisperin'!" he called to the prospector, who got up unsteadily and waited for the driver to come back from the kitchen.

"Oscar, you ain't seen Cloudy, have you?" he asked.

"I ain't seen Cloudy for a week or so, Whisperin'."

"What'd you say?"

The driver grinned and went out of the place.

"Daggone it, a feller can't even git a decent answer around these diggin's no more. I'm gittin' sick and tired of askin'."

The driver came back and sat down at a table. The proprietor came in with some glasses of water, and the driver said to him—.

"What happened to Cloudy?"

"I dunno; ask Whisperin'."

"You ain't seen him, have you?" asked Whisperin'.

"Has he got lost?"

"Huh?"

"Didja lose him?" yelled the driver.

"Lose him? No, I didn't lose him. He had fifty dollars of my money, and he jist faded out. Ain't in Dancin' City and he ain't in Cobalto. I tell you, I'm worried about him."

"You're worried about that fifty dollars."

"What'd you say, Oscar?"

"I said I was sorry for you."

"Oh, yeah."

Whisperin' went stumbling out, and the driver chuckled as he turned to Hashknife.

"Queer old coot, this Whisperin' Wilson. He hears everythin' he wants to hear, y'betcha. Cloudy was his pardner. Don't nobody know any other name for him except Cloudy. Whisperin' is as harmless as a brush rabbit, but Cloudy was a fightin' old devil."

"Was or is?" asked Hashknife.

"Well—" the driver laughed—"he's missin', and that makes him *was*, I reckon."

A slatternly sort of girl came out with the food. The proprietor helped her with the serving.

"What became of the old roadrunner?" he asked.

"Oh, he staggered out," said the driver.

"I wish he'd keep right on staggerin'. He acts like I had Cloudy hid in my pocket. Still, I feel sorry for him, losin' fifty dollars. That's a lot of money to lose. I'm wonderin' where he ever got that much money."

"Him and Cloudy helped Jeff Rickson on a roundup," replied the driver, his mouth full of food. "They was out at the Cross-in-a-Box a couple months. Cloudy's a pretty good hand, but Whisperin' ain't worth much. Rickson told me he had to hire both of 'em, 'cause Cloudy wouldn't work unless Whisperin' had a job, too."

The meal was fairly good, and the relaxation put them all in better spirits. But the girl did not offer any conversation. The last half of the road was as bad as the first, with the heat a little more intense.

"What about that mail robbery?" asked Hashknife.

The driver spat, threw a rock at his leaders and looked sidewise at Hashknife.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Were you drivin'?"

"Yeah."

"Any idea who pulled the job?"

The driver drew a huge plug of tobacco from a hip pocket, bit off a generous hunk and replaced the plug.

"I'm hired to drive the stage," he said. "They don't pay me for gittin' myself any bright ideas."

"Oh, I wasn't curious." Hashknife smiled.

"It don't pay no dividends," agreed the driver dryly.

Hashknife smiled to himself. He had not been at all interested in that robbery until the driver had made that reply. He had merely wondered why anybody would rob the mail from Dancing City.

It was nearly dark when they reached Dancing City. The character and age of the buildings attested to the fact that Dancing City had been standing there on the mesa for many years. Sand and wind had scoured away any paint that might once have been. The main street was narrow, dusty and crooked, and at about the middle of it the stage drew up at the one hotel of the town.

Sleepy carried the girl's one valise over to the hotel, and then secured a room for himself and Hashknife. That formality over, the two cowboys went out to inspect the town.

"If this place ain't gone to seed, I'm all wrong," decided Hashknife.

THEY roamed both sides of the street for awhile, and finally entered a little Chinese restaurant to eat supper. A gray haired man was there at one of the tables, and when he nodded pleasantly to them they sat down at his table. A Chinaman took their order and the gray haired man smiled.

"I'm just like you," he said. "I eat my eggs boiled. The hen certainly did us a favor when she encased her product in dirt proof packages."

"It's a safe food." Hashknife laughed.

"I saw you on the stage," said the man. "This your first time in Dancing City?"

"First time," agreed Hashknife. "Seems like a quiet place."

"Yes, it is quiet. I've been here a long time; I'm the postmaster."

"Is that so? Then mebbe you know Jim Woods."

The postmaster looked curiously at Hashknife.

"Yes, I knew him well."

"You *knew* him?"

"Didn't you hear what happened to Jim Woods?"

"Did somethin' happen to him?"

"We buried him up there on the mesa the other day."

"Jim Woods?" exclaimed Hashknife.

"He was the only one of that name around here."

"Well, what on earth happened to him?"

"Murdered."

Hashknife leaned his elbows on the table and stared at the man.

"Was it on account of the gold he found?" asked Hashknife.

"You knew about that?"

"I heard about the gold."

"Well, I don't know whether that caused it or not; but my guess would be that Woods refused to talk about it. Perhaps he did tell, and they killed him anyway. He was found in an alley at the far end of the street. It looked as though they used a pick handle on him. Except for his clothes and the things in his pockets, we'd never have known who he was. We gave him a good funeral."

Hashknife leaned back in his chair to let the waiter place food on the table.

"So he really had some gold, eh?" said Sleepy.

"He did."

"Didn't it cause some excitement?"

"Could you look at chunks of almost pure gold, chunks as big as walnuts, and not get excited? Every man in Dancing City was all set to stampede. But Woods wouldn't tell where he got it. He came back here in bad shape. I guess

he had a terrible time."

"Do you reckon he really found a lost mine?" asked Hashknife.

"Who knows? Some one is always finding the Lost Jackass mine."

"Was it rich?"

"Twenty feet wide, solid gold, and a mile long," exaggerated the postmaster. "Anyway, Jim Woods was a big man for awhile. He sold the gold and bought new clothes. Even paid forty dollars for a hat and a hundred for a watch. We saved everything, in case an heir shows up—which has already happened."

"An heir to Jim Woods' things?" asked Hashknife.

"His daughter; the lady who came in with you on the stage. And I wish she hadn't. I'm chairman of the school board, and she's the new teacher; so it's up to me to go and tell her what happened to her father."

Hashknife drew a deep breath and began stirring his coffee with the handle of his spoon.

"So that was Jim Woods' daughter, eh?" he said slowly.

"I'm sorry to admit that she is. You see, we've had a hard time getting a teacher up here. It's a long ways from any other town, and the conditions are not the best. I was talking with Jim Woods about it, and he said he had a daughter who had just become a teacher. It seems that Jim never supported her much. I got her address and wrote her.

"This was when Jim first got back here. I didn't mention his being here. She replied that she would take the position. After Jim was killed, I knew there was no use trying to get in touch with her. So that's the way things are—and I've got to take the news to her."

"I don't envy you the job," said Hashknife. "I understand you had a holdup a short time ago."

"Yes, we did; the first one we ever had on the stage line."

"Did they make any money out of it?" asked Sleepy.

"Not a thing. The fools stole two pouches of mail. That is, they stole two sacks with a little mail in each. Not a registered package. I can't imagine what they ever expected to get. We don't have one registered package a week out of here."

"Didja ever find the pouches?" asked Hashknife.

"No, we never did. Well—" he shoved back his chair and got up—"I'll be moving on, gents. This is one job I hate, but it must be done."

"Good luck to you," said Hashknife.

After he left the restaurant, Sleepy sighed deeply.

"Well, it was a wild goose chase, even if Woods didn't lie, Hashknife," he said.

The tall cowboy nodded thoughtfully as he sipped his coffee, his keen gray eyes half closed. Sleepy began rolling a cigaret. There was no further use in staying at Dancing City, but Sleepy knew they would never leave until Hashknife knew who killed Jim Woods.

"There don't seem to be any mystery to it," said Sleepy.

"Mystery?" Hashknife looked up quickly. "You mean the murder of Jim Woods?"

"Sure. That's no mystery."

"Mebbe not. But if you wanted to find out somethin' from a man, would you beat his head almost off?"

"Mebbe they got the information first."

"And then, in maniacal fury, as they say, beat him to a pulp, eh?"

"It does sound crazy," admitted Sleepy. "That mail robbery looks like the work of a crazy person, too. My idea of a real smart thing to do would be for me and you to travel out of here in the mornin'. This place smells unhealthy to me."

"That's the Chinaman cookin' cauliflower," suggested Hashknife.

Sleepy laughed and shoved his chair against the wall.

"Hop to it, tall feller," he said. "Don't mind me. I may go to school, if I can find me a book and a slate."

Sleepy knew they were doomed to stay in Dancing City for awhile. He

could tell by the expression of Hashknife's eyes that his mind was already working on the case. A mystery, to Hashknife, was a challenge. He was not a man hunter, but he had been born with a want-to-know complex and a keen mind which had unraveled many range mysteries.

Sleepy did not stop to analyze anything. With a laugh on his lips or a smoking gun in his hand, he trusted Hashknife implicitly; two wandering cowboys, always wondering what was on the other side of the next hill.

Always broke, or nearly so, they gave no heed to the morrow. Today was today, and tomorrow might never come. Life had made them fatalists. They played a square game and all they asked was a square deal. To others, this murder of Jim Woods was merely the work of a fiend. The stage holdup was merely another robbery. But to Hashknife it was a puzzle, defying him to find a solution.

Neither of them had any regret over losing a chance to get rich. They had no use for wealth. Jim Woods' letter had given them a chance to enter a strange corner of the range country; a reason for crossing strange hills, to see new people.

"I think we owe old Jim an investigation," said Hashknife, as they sauntered up the street. "Just because I was able to prove him innocent of horse stealin' down on Twisted River that time, he wanted to repay us with a fortune."

"You don't need to prove any alibi to me." Sleepy smiled. "But don't forget what the stage driver said when you asked him about that holdup."

"I'm rememberin' that." Hashknife nodded.

THEY wandered over to the War Dance Saloon. It was the biggest saloon and gambling house in the town, owned and operated by Jeff Rickson, who also owned the Cross-in-a-Box cattle outfit.

Rickson was a huge man, with a large, bony face; his head was entirely devoid of hair. His eyes were small, faded blue in color and spaced wide on each side of his flat nose. His ears were small and grew close to his skull with hardly any flare.

Rickson was standing at the bar, talking with Oscar Neal, the stage driver, when Hashknife and Sleepy came in. Oscar grinned and offered to buy a drink. They compromised on cigars.

"These gents came in with me from Cobalto," explained Oscar.

"I saw 'em on the stage." Rickson nodded.

"As a matter of fact, we came here to meet Jim Woods," said Hashknife. "And now we find he's dead and buried."

"If you'd said somethin', I could have saved you the trip," said Oscar.

Rickson looked keenly at the two cowboys.

"Yeah," he said, "Woods is dead and buried."

"That was his daughter on the stage with us," said Oscar. "I knowed who she was, but I wasn't goin' to break no bad news to her. Let somebody else do that."

"You knew she was comin'?" asked Hashknife.

"Sure—she's goin' to teach school here."

"Did you fellers know Woods pretty well?" asked Rickson.

"Pretty well. Of course, we ain't seen him for quite awhile."

"Minin' men?"

Hashknife laughed.

"I don't reckon we qualify there."

"You don't look like miners," said Oscar. "You know, Rickson owns the biggest cattle spread around here."

"The range don't look like much to me," said Sleepy.

"It's all right," replied Rickson, motioning for the bartender to serve them.

"I understand Jim Woods struck some rich ore," said Hashknife.

Rickson smiled grimly.

"He struck almost pure gold. But it wasn't around here. He died without

tellin' anybody where it was. Probably saved a stampede. Where did you hear about his strike?"

Hashknife drew out the letter he had received from Jim Woods. Rickson grunted softly as he read it.

"That's tough on you fellers," he said. "I guess old Jim was crazy, but he sure struck somethin' rich. Wasn't nobody tryin' to take it away from him, though. Them old prospectors suspect everybody."

"Why do you reckon he was murdered?" asked Hashknife.

"That's pretty hard to tell. Nobody will ever know."

Some one called Rickson to the rear of the place, and the two cowboys returned to the hotel.

"Rickson is a salty lookin' gent," observed Sleepy.

"He don't look as though him and his hair ever got along together—" Hashknife laughed.

They met the postmaster in front of the hotel.

"Well, how didja come out as a bearer of bad news?" asked Hashknife.

"Haven't had a chance to deliver it yet. Miss Woods probably went out to eat supper, and she isn't back yet. Perhaps she met one of the other trustees and went out to their home for supper. I hope she did, because they'll have to tell her the bad news. Is she good looking?"

"She sure is," said Sleepy quickly.

"That's too bad. Good looking ones don't last long. Either get married or discouraged. I don't think I'll wait any longer; my wife might get the wrong idea of things."

"Don't the hotel proprietor know where she went?"

"Green? Oh, he isn't here, now. Every so often he goes down to Cobalto, gets blind drunk for a few days, joins a church or two and comes back here to repent. He ought to be back about tomorrow. He's been doing that same thing for years. Well, I'll see you boys later."

HENRY ASHBY, marshal of Dancing City, stretched his cadaverous six feet, six inches, glared down at Whisperin' Wilson, who was sitting on the edge of the wooden sidewalk, and sank down in a chair under the War Dance Saloon porch.

"I'll tell you about me," said Henry wearily. "I'm a dang smart person, Whisperin'. If I got m' just dues I'd be a United States marshal, Senator or somethin', instead of marshal of this here danged town. I know lots of things and I can do lots of things, but I'll be durned if I can tell you where Cloudy went. You act like I could reach in my pocket and draw him out."

"What'd you say, Hennery?" asked Whisperin'.

"I was jist sayin'," replied Henry wearily, "that if you was properly skinned and dried you'd make good jerky."

"They do make good jerky," said Whisperin'. "I've et lots of it."

"What?"

"Burros."

"Who in the hell said anythin' about burros?"

"No question about it." Whisperin' nodded. "But what I want to know is, where in hell did Cloudy go? He had fifty dollars of my money."

"I know," sighed Henry. "He jist stepped out of your life and took your money along to smooth his path."

"Whose wife? Hell, he never monkeyed with no women!"

"I ain't seen him for a week."

"Huh?"

"Shake up your ears!"

"Do you really think that, Hennery?"

"Think what?"

"He may be gone for years."

Henry Ashby snorted, cuffed his sombrero down over one eye and prepared to take a little siesta. Henry was good natured, but old Whisperin' annoyed him with his questions about Cloudy. Henry was not interested in Cloudy.

No one seemed to know what Cloudy's

other name was. Apparently it was merely a nickname, but even Whisperin', who had been Cloud's partner for years, did not know any other name for him.

Hashknife and Sleepy came out of the hotel, and Whisperin' saw them.

"Hennery," he said, "there's them two strangers. I'll betcha they're a couple Gov'ment men, sent up here to find out who stuck up the stage. I seen 'em yes'day down at the Halfway House, askin' a lot of questions."

Henry opened one eye and looked across the street.

"Mebbe you *seen* 'em askin' questions, but you never *heard* 'em," he replied sleepily.

"No," said Whisperin', "I didn't hear what their names was."

"You keep on guessin' and you'll be able to carry on a pretty good conversation with yourself," grunted Henry.

Hashknife and Sleepy came across the street, and Henry sized them up curiously.

"Good mornin', gentlemen," said Hashknife. "What's the good word?"

"You'll find it in the Bible," drawled Henry.

"Sufferin' sundogs!" snorted Sleepy. "A marshal with a sense of humor!"

"It's a funny job," said Henry.

"I'm lookin' for a feller named Cloudy," said Whisperin'.

"Ain't you found him yet?" asked Hashknife. "How'd you lose him?"

"Whisperin' had fifty dollars and he let Cloudy take care of it for him—" Henry grinned. "That's a dandy way to git rid of a pardner."

"I'm commencin' to mourn him a lot," said Whisperin'. "He was a dinger of a pardner and one of the finest fellers you ever knowed; but it looks as though the doublecrossin' thief done me wrong."

Whisperin' got to his feet, slapped his old hat on one side of his shaggy head and bowlegged his way across the street. Henry grinned after him, shaking his head sadly.

"Poor old Whisperin'," he said.

"He mourns for Cloudy," said Hashknife.

"What do you reckon became of Cloudy?" asked Sleepy.

"Oh, I reckon he skipped out. Ain't nobody seen him for a week or so. He had a little money and mebbe he wanted to spend it in peace."

"Didn't he have peace?" asked Sleepy.

"With him havin' to repeat everythin' two or three times? But he hadn't ort to have taken Whisperin's money."

"What sort of a lookin' person was this Cloudy?" asked Hashknife.

"Well, he was about the same size as Whisperin'. Mebbe not quite so heavy. Cloudy didn't wear no whiskers, though. His hair was kinda sandy."

"They were both prospectors, weren't they?" asked Hashknife.

"At times they pecked around a little. Their last job was with Rickson at the Cross-in-a-Box, helpin' with the roundup. I don't reckon Whisperin' was worth much, but Cloudy was all right. Rickson said the whole bunch spent their time yellin' at Whisperin'."

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy decided to eat their breakfast at the Chinese restaurant. Henry Ashby had another good start on his interrupted siesta when Jeff Rickson came from the saloon, sat down in a chair and bit the end off a cigar. Henry looked at him with one eye.

"What do you know about them two fellers?" asked Rickson.

"Less than nothin'," replied Henry.

"What's their business in Dancin' City?"

"Why don'tcha ask 'em yourself, Rickson?"

Rickson pulled violently on the unlighted cigar.

"I seen Ed Walsh headin' for Cobalto yes'day," offered Henry. "He was b'ilin' mad. Said he was goin' to have a heart-to-heart talk with the sheriff about somebody rustlin' his cows. I never did see Ed so mad. Easy goin', Ed is; but not now. He's all horns and rattles."

Rickson smiled grimly.

"Losin' cows, eh?"

"Sounded like he was. Been havin' a little roundup out at the Slash Bar 7, and it seems their count don't look right."

"Walsh always has some crazy ideas," said Rickson.

"F'r instance, gittin' the sheriff to help him?"

"What do you mean, Henry?"

"Well, the sheriff has a interest in your cow outfit, hasn't he?"

Rickson heaved himself up out of his chair awkwardly.

"You make another crack like that and I'll throw you out into the street!" he roared.

Henry looked calmly at him.

"Jeff, you've got what them doctors is callin' high blood pressure. Even your head is red. You'll have to take care of yourself."

"Damn you, Ashby, you can't insinuate—"

"Aw, set down, Jeff. You're too touchy. At your age you've got to be careful."

"You can't accuse me of stealin' cattle."

"If I can't, all right. I don't want to do anythin' I can't do."

Rickson sat down, glaring at the marshal.

"If anybody else said what you've said, I'd shore drill 'em," said Rickson. "Why, damn you, Ashby, what's the idea?"

Henry chuckled softly.

"You're about as safe to joke with as a rattler."

"That sort of stuff is no joke," growled Rickson, and went into the saloon.

Henry cocked one eye thoughtfully for several moments. Then the eye closed slowly and Henry proceeded to partake of his siesta. He was only the marshal of Dancing City; and cattle stealing was out of his line.

It was about noon when Tom Pelkey, the sheriff, and Fat Olson, his deputy, rode into Dancing City. Pelkey was a smallish man, grizzled, hard of face. Fat was well named. He was about five feet six inches tall, and weighed two hundred and thirty-five. Fat was born tired. Some one once asked him if he ever intended doing anything worthwhile. Fat replied that he hoped some day to find a saddle big enough for him. It was a long ride from Cobalto, and Fat was weary.

They tied their horses in front of the War Dance Saloon. The sheriff went into the saloon, but Fat sank down in a chair on the porch. Old Whisperin' Wilson saw him and came across the street. Fat sighed, got to his feet and went into the saloon. Rickson was behind the bar.

"I hear that Ed Walsh went down to see you," he said to the sheriff.

Pelkey mopped his brow with a soiled handkerchief and nodded.

"He turned off at his ranch."

"Pelkey, have you seen anythin' of Cloudy?"

Whisperin' had moved in and was leaning against the bar. The sheriff looked him over wearily.

"I ain't seen him, Whisperin'."

"He had fifty dollars of my money."

"Go and swing your loop in the street," growled Rickson.

"Huh?" said Whispering.

"I said get to hell out of here and stay out."

Whispering paid no attention to Rickson's order.

"You see," he said, turning to the sheriff, "me and Cloudy worked for Rickson, out at the Cross-in-a-Box. I had fifty dollars, and Cloudy said if I didn't look out I'd lose it to one of Rickson's games. He said that was how Rickson got rich—takin' money away from his hired help. Cloudy said he wouldn't never take chances playin' against a crooked game; so I let him have that fifty dollars, and now he—"

"You dirty old bum!" roared Rickson, as he grasped Whisperin' by the throat with one hand, while with the other he smashed him full in the face.

The blow sent Whisperin' staggering backward toward the doorway, as Hashknife and Sleepy came in. Hashknife caught the old man around the body, holding him upright, until he saw that Whisperin' was knocked out, when he placed him in a chair.

Not a word was said. Rickson, red faced, breathing heavily; the sheriff leaning against the bar; the deputy sitting on the edge of a table. The bartender looked from man to man, wondering what might happen next.

Hashknife looked at the old man slumped in the chair, a trickle of blood from his lips staining his beard. Then the gray eyes of the tall cowboy shifted to Rickson in a cold stare of accusation. Rickson licked his lips and the sheriff shifted uneasily.

"It must have been a mighty strong reason for anybody to hit an old man thataway," said Hashknife evenly.

"Is it any of your business?" asked Rickson hoarsely.

"He is old enough to be your father," said Hashknife.

"He's crazy," growled Rickson. He didn't like the light in Hashknife's eyes.

"Not even a savage will strike a crazy man, Rickson."

"No? Well, this damned old fool accused me of bein' crooked."

Hashknife's lips laughed, but his eyes were hard.

"If he's crazy, what matter? And you," he said, turning to the sheriff, "are the sheriff of this county—standin' there and lettin' this happen. They must breed a fine lot of men in these hills."

The sheriff flushed hotly and tried to find a fitting reply, but the deputy sighed audibly and said—

"He's right—it wasn't the thing to do."

"You don't need to horn in on this, Fat," said Rickson. "As far as these strangers are concerned, it's none of their damn business, either."

"Well," said Fat slowly, "I know right from wrong, Rickson."

Old Whisperin' was conscious now. He wiped his hand across his lips and looked curiously at the blood. He looked at Rickson in a dazed sort of way and managed to get to his feet.

"I—I been lookin' for Cloudy," he said slowly. "I guess I been lookin' for him a long time. No use lookin', I don't suppose. I still got his gun, loaded full of .45's. Uh-huh, I still got that gun."

And the old man went staggering out of the saloon, wiping the blood off his bearded lips. From where Rickson stood, he could see Whisperin' going across the street. The old man was going back to his shack to get the gun Cloudy had left there. Rickson shifted his eyes to the sheriff, who was looking down at the floor.

Hashknife and Sleepy turned and walked out. Fat relaxed, sighed deeply, and Rickson gave him a malevolent glance.

"Who are them two?" asked the sheriff.

Rickson turned to the bar and motioned for drinks.

"One's name is Hashknife and the other is Sleepy—damn 'em both!" growled Rickson.

Fat whistled softly, as he and the sheriff exchanged glances.

"What's the idea?" growled Rickson.

"I wish I knew," said the sheriff.

"Well, spit it out! Who the devil are they?"

"What do *you* know about 'em?" asked the sheriff.

Rickson told about the note Hashknife had showed him; the note from Jim Woods.

"Now you tell me what you know about 'em," said Rickson.

The sheriff knew nothing personally about them; he could only repeat garbled tales of what these two cowboys had done.

"I don't believe half of that," declared Rickson.

"And me," said Fat Olson, "I don't believe more 'n ten per cent of it's true. But even that much makes 'em stack up pretty tall."

"Do you suppose they're in here to investigate that mail robbery?" asked Rickson.

"I never thought of that," replied the sheriff. "Mebbe so. But I never heard of 'em workin' for Uncle Sam. They've done work for the Association. Mebbe Walsh had 'em sent in here."

"Well, what if they are?" queried Fat. "We're actin' as though we'd done somethin' wrong and was afraid somebody'd find it out. How about a little shot of liquor?"

"That's right—let's have a drink," grunted Rickson.

SLEEPY was all in favor of taking the next stage out of town.

"This place has gone to seed, Hashknife," he said, as they sat down in front of the hotel. "We can't do any good here. Jim Woods is dead and buried, and as far as ever findin' out who robbed that stage—what do we care?"

Hashknife grinned.

"That stage robbery don't amount to anythin', Sleepy. And, as you say, Jim Woods is dead and buried."

"Then why stay here any longer?"

"Well, I dunno. We might help Whisperin' find Cloudy."

Sleepy snorted disgustedly.

"I'm not interested in Cloudy."

"Whisperin' shore is. I wish Rickson had given me a good cause to bust him one on the jaw for that punch he gave the old man."

"Well, I don't reckon the sheriff will have any cause to love you," said Sleepy. "You branded him with a yaller mark."

"I meant it," replied Hashknife seriously. "You can see that Rickson has the Injun sign on Pelkey; and Pelkey is yaller enough to stand there and watch Rickson hit a helpless old man."

Henry Ashby, the marshal, came sauntering along, stopped near them and looked across the street toward the hitch-rack.

"The law comes to Dancin' City," he observed dryly. "Everythin' will be all right now."

"I suppose the country is saved," said Hashknife.

"Uh-huh. It didn't happen to be one of them that slugged old Whisperin', did it?"

"Rickson hit him," replied Hashknife.

"He did, eh? Yea-a-ah, I reckon he would. I tried to get Whisperin' to tell me who hit him, but he wouldn't understand my question. He said he was goin' to get a gun."

"You didn't think the sheriff would hit him, dija?" asked Hashknife.

"Na-a-aw, he ain't got nerve enough to even hit an old man."

Sleepy considered Henry thoughtfully.

"You don't happen to play pool, do you?" he asked.

"Pool!" snorted Henry. "Why, dang it, I started that game. Actually did. I sawed the corners off a billiard table and hung on some—"

"I suppose your ancestors had the pool concession on the *Mayflower*," interrupted Sleepy.

"*Mayflower!* Why, they was runnin' a pool hall when that boat landed."

"C'mon," said Sleepy, and they headed for the War Dance. Pool was an obsession with Sleepy.

Hashknife sat down in a chair near the door of the hotel and was deep in thought, when the postmaster came along and sat down beside him.

"Well, how are things comin'?" asked Hashknife.

The postmaster laughed shortly and sat down.

"I haven't had a chance to talk with that girl," he said.

"Let it go long enough and somebody else will tell her," said Hashknife.

"I hope they do. Some one who saw her told my wife that she was too pretty ever to stay in Dancing City. I don't mean my wife is. The English language is confusing at times."

"I dunno." Hashknife smiled. "I

never speak it."

"You speak Arizona."

"And yet, I learned to talk in Montana. I reckon I talk West."

"Yes, I suppose that is true. I believe I shall go in now and see if I may have a few words with Miss Woods."

He went into the hotel, but five minutes later he came out.

"No luck?" asked Hashknife.

"Not a bit. You've met Percy Rogers, haven't you? The young man who runs the hotel during Mr. Green's absence. Well, I asked Percy if I might see Miss Woods, and he said she was sick. He said she wasn't to be disturbed.

"I asked him if the jolting ride had affected her, and he said he hadn't looked. I hope—" he laughed—"that we haven't hired a temperamental teacher. Did she seem pleasant?"

"I think she spoke two words durin' the trip," said Hashknife.

"Terrible."

"I was just wonderin' why they don't serve meals at this hotel. They've got a dinin' room."

The postmaster laughed.

"Can't keep a waitress. Green said he had one coming from Tucson. If Green does the cooking, the town will be better off if the dining room never opens. He's an incinerator."

After the postmaster left him, Hashknife walked out to the little cemetery on the hill where they had buried Jim Woods. He found the newly painted board which marked the old man's last resting place. There was no date of birth or death, merely the man's name.

Hashknife sat down on a boulder and rolled a smoke. Lizards scuttled about, as though playing hide and seek with each other. A vinegaroon, with its whip-like tail curved high, came along in the dusty path, sheered aside when Hashknife scuffled his foot in the dirt, and disappeared in the weeds.

It was not a pleasant land. Too harsh for women, unless they were born there and knew nothing better. Always the hot sun or piercing winds. Only after the midsummer rains were there any green things. It was a land for hard men—this place where the ancient Indian came to dance in the days and nights of long ago.

Far out beyond the mesa rim were the lower lands, a lazy gray in the sunlight, where mirage blended into mirage in the changing lights near sundown. It was not new to Hashknife Hartley. Nearly all his life he had been riding the ranges.

HIS cigaret finished, he ground it in the dust beneath his heel and walked back to Dancing City. The sheriff, Fat Olson and Rickson stood at a window and watched Hashknife saunter down the street.

"There's a feller that will get his horns sawed off if he stays here," said Rickson.

"Take a mighty good man and a sharp saw," said Fat.

Rickson looked sharply at Fat, but turned again to the window.

"Been up to the graveyard lookin' at Woods' grave, I suppose," he said.

"No harm in that," replied Fat. "Woods was his friend, and you can't object to him lookin' at a friend's grave, can you?"

"Let up," grunted the sheriff. "It's none of your business."

"It's none of Rickson's business, either," stated Fat.

"Keep it up," growled the sheriff. "I told you once to—"

"Listen to me, Pelkey," interrupted Fat hotly. "I'll talk as I damn please. Ever since Jeff hit that old man I've been boilin'. I don't care if Rickson owns every nail in this blamed town, and I don't care if he controls enough votes to keep you in office. If you want to crawl when he whistles, go to it! But don't ask me to do it. That's plain talk and you can like it or not."

Rickson's eyes were blazing, but he kept his arms folded. He knew Fat Olson had a hair-trigger disposition and

was dangerously fast on the draw. The sheriff hesitated in his reply. He owned an interest in the Cross-in-a-Box with Rickson, and Rickson did swing the votes of that community.

"I reckon that lets you out, Fat," he said.

"Meanin' that I'm through as a deputy?"

"Yeah, that's it."

"It's all right, Pelkey. Here's your badge. And be sure your next deputy don't know too much about Rickson."

Fat laughed at Rickson, turned his back and walked out of the saloon. He saw Hashknife and Sleepy in front of the hotel and went over to join them. Rickson cursed softly as he watched Fat cross the street.

"It's time you got rid of that feller," he told the sheriff. "One more word from him and I'd have smashed him on the chin."

"You might have tried," said the sheriff mildly, "but I don't believe there's a livin' man that can hit him on the chin—not if he's lookin' for the punch."

"You ain't backin' him, are you, Pelkey?"

"I fired him, didn't I?"

"That's right. Let's have a drink."

Fat stopped at the edge of the sidewalk near Hashknife and Sleepy.

"My name's Olson," he said, a humorous twinkle in his eye. "I was a deputy sheriff when you was over at the War Dance awhile ago."

"Ain't you the deputy now?" asked Hashknife.

"Nope. Me and Rickson had a run-in, and I ain't no deputy no more."

"What's Rickson got to do with you?"

"Well, it's like this: Pelkey is part owner of the Cross-in-a-Box with Rickson, who kinda swings the vote of Dancin' City. It's a case of love me, love my dog. I didn't love the dog, 'cause he bit an old man."

"What are you goin' to do now?" asked Sleepy.

"Go back to punchin' cows, I reckon. Right now I'm ridin' out to the Slash Bar 7 to see my friend Walsh."

"Olson," said Hashknife, "didn't your office make any investigation of Jim Woods' murder?"

"Well, not much."

"Are you comin' back here tonight?"

"I may stay out at the Slash Bar 7. You never met Ed Walsh, did you?"

"No, we haven't met him yet."

"You'll have to meet Ed; he's a white man. His outfit is small, but he's gettin' along. I'm not an officer now, but I reckon I've got a right to talk to him about some cattle rustlin'."

"What sort of a bunch is the Cross-in-a-Box?" asked Hashknife.

Fat glanced over at the War Dance Saloon, cuffed his hat over one eye and, with a wiggling, waving motion of his right hand, he made the Indian hand-talk sign of the snake. Then he drew the edge of his hand across his throat, hitched up his belt and began making a cigaret.

Hashknife and Sleepy smiled. They both knew something of hand-talk; enough to interpret Fat's opinion of Rickson's outfit.

Fat Olson got his horse and rode away, and in a short while the sheriff headed back toward Cobalto. Henry Ashby joined them, and they told him about Olson's losing his job.

"Well, I ain't a whole lot surprised," he said. "Fat won't lick nobody's boots. Rickson's been runnin' things to suit himself for a long time. He even tried to give me orders. By golly, I shore told him where to head in at. I says, 'You lay off me and my job or there will be a lotta bottles of hair restorer left over at the Cross-in-a-Box.' "

"He'd love you for that remark," chuckled Sleepy.

"That's all right. I'm not scared of his gunmen."

"He's got some, has he?" asked Hashknife.

"Well, he's got Buzz Allen, Blue Moon and Shorty Long. Pete Larabee and Tonto Smith are fellers I've knowed a

long time. They're bad, but not dangerous. Allen, Moon and Long are from down in the Panhandle."

"Bad boys, eh?" mused Sleepy.

"Ain't done nothin' worse than git drunk around here. But they've got possibilities. I'm kinda watchin' for old Whisperin' to show up with his gun. Gotta kinda close herd him, you see. He ain't got no business swappin' lead with Rickson. Too old and slow. Ho-o-o-hum! At that, I'd like to see somethin' happen. Ain't had a good mess of trouble for a long, long time."

"What time does the stage leave here for Cobalto?" asked Hashknife.

"Six o'clock in the mornin'."

"I thought they must leave early, 'cause I ain't seen it leave."

"Yeah; you see, this stage goes through Cobalto, and over to Windy Springs; so they have to leave here early."

Henry moved on, watching for Whisperin' Wilson.

"It seems to me that Mr. Rickson ain't so awful well liked," observed Sleepy.

"And him so lovable," said Hashknife.

LATE in the afternoon Fat Olson and Ed Walsh came to town, leading two saddled horses. Walsh was a smallish man, hard bitten, but with a humorous twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Me and Fat got to talkin'," explained Walsh," and we agreed that mebbe you two would like to come out to the Slash Bar 7. It ain't no hell of a swell place, but it suits us pretty good."

"You shore made a guess," said Hashknife. "When do we start."

"Well," replied Walsh seriously," I reckon one time is as good as another. I did have a mind to go over and tell Jeff Rickson what I think of him, but I reckon it'll keep. Fat was tellin' me about you callin' him for hittin' the old man. All I ask from this country is one chance to hit Rickson so hard that he'll grow six feet of blond hair on his slick dome; and a chance to kick Tim Pelkey off the edge of the Grand Canyon."

"Be quite a come-down for a sheriff," said Hashknife dryly.

"He's got it comin'. I go plumb down to Cobalto to tell him I'm losin' cows. Then he rides back with me as far as the forks of the road, and then comes over here to drink with Rickson. He ain't interested in cattle rustlin'—not when they're rustled from me."

Hashknife and Sleepy went up to their room to change to their overalls and old shirts; and when they came back, wearing chaps and guns, Walsh looked them over critically, but said nothing.

Walsh had selected a pair of good horses for them. Hashknife lengthened his stirrups and climbed into the saddle. The horse danced nervously and Hashknife grinned.

"Show horse, eh?" remarked Hashknife as they rode up the street.

"Fastest thing in the country," replied Walsh. "I've jumped him over five feet of rail fence."

They went slowly along the dusty road, which wound far back on a mesa. The Slash Bar 7 was about three miles from Dancing City. They came out on the edge of the mesa, where far below them they could see the ranch. It was almost a bird's-eye view. They drew rein to take in the view.

On the far side of the buildings were brushy hills, with a network of cattle trails. A huge old wooden windmill towered above the live oaks around the weatherbeaten buildings.

"Shore looks like home," said Sleepy.

"Ain't that a rider comin' down one of them trails?" asked Hashknife, pointing at the hills beyond the house.

"It shore is!" snorted Walsh. "Look at the son of a gun travel."

The tiny horse and its almost invisible rider were coming at top speed, still a quarter of a mile away from the ranch, when more riders appeared behind him. Walsh swore softly, standing in his stir-

rups for a better view.

A faint popping of shots came to their ears. From where they sat on their horses they could see the yard and part of the ranch corrals. A man ran out in the yard as the first rider came in between the stable and a corral fence.

It seemed as though the riders following had disappeared in the heavier brush along an arroyo. The rider seemed to swing his horse in a circle, and went sprawling in the dust. The other man flung up his arm, as though shooting a gun, and he too went down.

"Good Lord, what's going on?" roared Walsh, and spurred down the twisting grade.

Hashknife shook up his horse, which surged swiftly past Walsh, then took the bit in its teeth and went down that crooked road at breakneck speed. Hashknife did not try to pull it up; he was too busy twisting himself in the saddle, giving the horse every possible chance to keep its feet.

It would seem impossible for any horse to run that fast down such a crooked grade. On the sharp turns Hashknife was riding almost at a right angle to his horse. With a less experienced rider, the horse would have piled up at the second turn. Far behind came the other three men.

Hashknife swept out on the flat, the horse running like a mad thing. Hashknife drew a tight rein, but the cold jawed animal was as inflexible as an iron horse. The big gate was open. Hashknife flung himself sidewise to prevent a collision with a post.

He caught a flash of two men on the ground, a saddled horse standing with its head down; and the next moment he and his horse were hurdling a fence at the edge of a dry wash.

The horse landed in sand and silt, throwing a cloud of soil like an exploding bomb. A grunt and a lurch, and they were tearing through mesquite and catclaw. Hashknife heard the whine of a bullet past his ear. He flung up one hand to ward off the branches and drew his gun with the other.

They were in a trail now. He caught a glimpse of a man and a horse. The man was on foot, levering a cartridge into a rifle. Hashknife swung sidewise and fired at him, but the horse was at a lurching gallop, spoiling any chance of accuracy.

A bullet struck the fork of Hashknife's saddle, and he could feel the shock in his legs. Another plucked at his sleeve, as the running horse swept down into a swale, out of sight of the shooters.

Hashknife surged back on the reins with every ounce of his power, and a rein snapped. It swung the horse partly around, and Hashknife deftly caught the headstall, cramping the animal's head and bringing it to a whirling stop.

The horse was nearly blown, as Hashknife knotted the broken rein, and was perfectly willing to quit racing. Hashknife had no desire to face those rifles again; so he rode straight down the swale and came out quite a distance above the buildings.

There were no more shots. He searched the hills with his eyes, as he rode back to the ranch, where he found the other three men working over the wounded.

"Scared they got you!" panted Sleepy. "Good gosh, how that horse can run! They drove us back with rifles and got away in the brush."

Hashknife climbed off his horse and came over. Fat and Walsh were giving first aid to one of the men.

"They got Erv Corbett," said Walsh soberly.

"Johnny's wakin' up!" exclaimed Fat, pouring more water on him. A bullet had scored the side of his head, knocking him out.

JOHNNY BAILES opened his eyes and stared at the men. Fat gave him a drink of water and he sat up, feeling his head. He scowled at sight of Erv Corbett and looked around.

"Do you know what happened, John-

ny?" asked Walsh.

"My Gawd, I dunno," wailed Johnny. "Where'd I git hit?"

"They parted your hair," said Fat.

"I feel all split to my belt line. Whooeee-e-e! I dunno what it was all about. I hears shootin' and I runs out. Erv went over to see if the windmill was workin' in Cactus Canyon, and here he comes, runnin' his bronc, swayin' in the saddle like a drunken man. Then there was a lot more shots, and Erv goes down kerplunk. I seen one rider; so I pulls my gun and takes a shot at him. That's all I know. Somethin' come knockin' on my door, I reckon."

"Is Corbett dead?" asked Hashknife.

"Shot three, four times," said Walsh sadly. "Fat, will you git a clean towel out of my room? We've got to bandage Johnny. This is the last straw, boys."

"Why would anybody shoot Erv?" asked Johnny painfully. "Hell, he never done nothin' to anybody."

"And follered him right into his own yard," said Hashknife. "You'll have to notify the sheriff, Walsh."

Walsh walked up to the house and leaned against the porch. Hashknife came up and Walsh turned to him.

"That boy's been workin' for me a long time, Hartley. It makes me sick all over. What can I do? How can I ever prove who done it? What good will the sheriff do? Oh, hell, it's awful."

"Who could it be?" asked Hashknife.

"That's the hell of it, Hartley. Southwest of us is the Walkin' Y outfit, southeast of town is the JB, and east of town is the Cross-in-a-Box. Take your pick."

"Have you ever had trouble with any of them, Walsh?"

"Had trouble a year ago with the Walkin' Y—water trouble. Never had any trouble with the JB."

"How about the Cross-in-a-Box?"

Walsh swore softly.

"That triple pardnership!"

"Owned by three people?"

"Pelkey, Rickson—and the devil."

Walsh turned away from the house and looked out toward the body of Erv Corbett. Some one had thrown a blanket over the body.

"We'll put him in the storeroom," said Walsh, a catch in his voice. "In the mornin' I'll have Tony Conejo pack a note down to the stage driver, tellin' the sheriff. No use of us ridin' down to Cobalto."

"Who is Tony?" asked Hashknife.

"Old Mexican. Been with me a long time. He's out visitin' today. No use goin' to town and spreadin' the news. Wouldn't do any good. We'll keep quiet and wait for the sheriff and coroner. Tony can git up at five o'clock and be down along the road to catch the stage."

"Johnny spoke about Corbett goin' over to a windmill," said Hashknife. "Suppose we ride over and look around. There must have been a reason for 'em killin' him."

"All right, you and me. You take Fat's horse."

But the search netted them nothing. They examined things around the windmill, where a few cattle were drinking, and came back to the house. Old Tony came home and was shocked dumb over the tragedy. He helped Walsh cook supper, and it was a sober crew that sat around the table that night. Even when Hashknife's runaway ride was discussed, it did not cause a smile. Walsh dug a .30-30 bullet out of the saddle. Before they went to bed Hashknife sterilized and bandaged Johnny's head wound.

Walsh wrote the note for Tony to deliver to the stage driver, and Hashknife heard Tony puttering around before daylight the next morning.

Breakfast was not ready until eight o'clock that morning. Johnny Bailes' head was sore, but he was too nervy to complain. Walsh had told Tony Conejo to come right back after he delivered the note, but Tony was still missing.

"Probably met some of his friends who own a bottle of tequila," said Johnny. "Tony shore loves that old maguey juice."

"He thinks with a reverse English," said Walsh, "but he's a faithful old Mex.

Been with me a long time . . . Doggone, I shore hate to lose Corbett. That boy was salt of the earth."

"All I ask is a chance to notch a sight on the jigger that killed him," said Bailes. "Erv was my bunkie, and they never made better."

The men loafed around the ranch, knowing that it would be late in the afternoon before the sheriff and coroner could arrive. Tony was still missing at noon and Walsh was worried.

"I wonder if anythin' happened to him on the way down to deliver that note. Mebbe we better ride down to the forks and have a look."

"All right," agreed Hashknife. "We might also go on to Dancin' City and kinda listen around."

"Johnny and me will stay here," said Fat.

Hashknife decided to ride the running bay again, and Sleepy threw a saddle on a hammer headed roan. The three men rode down to the forks of the road, but saw nothing of old Tony. Their search was perfunctory, after which they rode on to Dancing City.

Jack Bonham, owner of the JB outfit, was there. Bonham was a big, gruff cowman, who spoke with a soft Texas drawl. Walsh told him what had happened and Bonham swore angrily.

"That's bad business—damn bad," he said. "We've got to stop such things. We're too easy goin', Ed. Now if there's anythin' I can do for you, just let out a whoop."

"Thank you, Jack," said Walsh.

Hashknife and Sleepy went over to the hotel, where they met the postmaster. He nodded shortly to them.

"You don't happen to know where we can get a school teacher, do you?" he asked.

"What happened to the one you had?" asked Hashknife.

"Pulled out on the morning stage."

"No!"

"It's a fact. I guess she got one good look at the town and decided that it didn't suit her. I never even had a chance to talk with her. You know, she was supposed to have been sick yesterday, and I couldn't see her; so I came here about nine o'clock this morning. Percy gawped at me and said the lady left on the morning stage. It seems that she left a note saying that she was going back, and left two dollars to cover the room rent. That stage leaves so early in the morning that few of us ever see it pull out."

"So she turned down the job, eh?" said Hashknife. "I'm not a bit surprised."

"I'm not surprised, but I'm discouraged. Well, I've got to get busy and dig up a teacher. By the way, didn't I understand that you men were friends of Jim Woods?"

"That's right," said Hashknife.

"Come up to the office, will you? I've got a letter for Jim Woods. I thought at first I'd give it to the sheriff, but—well, I didn't. There isn't any return address, you see."

At the postoffice they got the letter, but were undecided what to do about it.

"Under the circumstances," said Hashknife, "I'd like to see what's in that letter."

"Go ahead," said the postmaster.

Hashknife opened it and took out the single sheet of paper. It was from Tucson, and the signature was Nola Woods. It read:

Dear Dad:

I found out yesterday that you are in Dancing City; so I hope this note will reach you. I had a letter from one of the school board about taking charge of their school, and I said I would. But after thinking it over, I don't care to go up there, and I have lost the name of the man who wrote me.

Will you please locate the head of the board and explain things to him? I'm sorry, but after investigating things I find that Dancing City has a bad reputation among teachers; so bad that I do not care to tackle it. Won't you please write me once in awhile, Dad?

Lovingly,

—NOLA WOODS

"Well, that's mighty funny," observed Hashknife.

"Isn't it?" agreed the postmaster.

"And her bein' here, too," said Sleepy.

"There's another funny angle to this," said the postmaster. "I had a talk with Jim Woods about his daughter. He said he didn't want me to mention him in connection with her getting this job, and I didn't. But I talked with him about writing her himself. I said it was only right for her to know where he was, and that he had made a rich strike. He didn't say he would or he wouldn't. But a couple days later he came in with a letter addressed to her, and told me he had written her. I remember it so well, because he talked about him not having had any education, and that it was hard work for him to write a letter. Jeff Rickson and Ed Walsh were in here, and after he went out, Walsh asked me about Woods' having a daughter. She writes as though she never heard from him."

"Well, who in the devil was this other girl?" wondered Sleepy.

"Did she call herself Miss Woods?"

"Not to us," replied Hashknife. "Oscar Neal said that her name was Woods and that she was Jim Woods' daughter."

The postmaster kept the letter and promised to write Nola Woods and tell her what happened to her father. Hashknife and Sleepy went to the hotel and talked with Percy Rogers.

"All I know is this," said Percy. "I ain't never up at stage time in the mornin', unless some guest is leavin'. Long about nine o'clock I went up to her room. She said one of the winders needed fixin' last night. But she wasn't in the room. I fixed the winder and then I found the note and the money on the table. I seen her about seven o'clock last night, but she didn't say nothin' about leavin'."

That was all Percy knew about it. Hashknife and Sleepy met Henry Ashby on the street, and they told him what had happened at the Slash Bar 7. The lanky marshal nearly exploded. He had known Erv Corbett a long time.

"Sounds crazy to me, Hartley. I've knowed Erv a long time, and he never was in trouble. Everybody liked him. Jist a good natured puncher, mindin' his own business. I tell you, it was jist dirty murder, tha'sall."

HASHKNIFE went over to the War Dance Saloon, where Walsh introduced him to Bud Ferris, owner of the Walking Y outfit. Ferris was a hard bitted little cowman, nervous of action and explosive of voice.

"I ain't never favored hangin' no man," declared Ferris, "but I'd help hang a man or a bunch of men like that. I tell you, we've gotta do somethin', Walsh. The sheriff won't help us."

"Why won't he help you?" asked Rickson, standing at the bar.

"Because he won't," retorted Ferris. "He's incapable, Rickson. Oh, I know he's your pardner—but that's all right."

"Pelkey's doin' his best," declared Rickson. "He don't claim to be a detective."

"Well, he won't be sheriff next term."

"That's all right. I don't believe Pelkey wants the job again."

"Good thing he don't."

Walsh talked things over with Hashknife, and decided to stay in Dancing City and wait for the sheriff and coroner. Walsh felt sure that they would come to town before going out to the Slash Bar 7. It would be close to ten o'clock that night before they would arrive, because the coroner would insist on coming in a buggy, being too old a man to make the trip on horseback.

Sleepy rode back to the ranch before supper to tell the boys that Walsh and Hashknife would not be out until late. Old Tony Conejo had not arrived, but Whisperin' Wilson was out there.

"I ain't wanted in Dancin' City," he explained. "Rickson busted me pretty bad, and Hennery Ashby said I didn't have no business packin' a gun around town; so I come out here to be among friends."

"You're welcome, Whisperin'," said

Johnny Bailes.

"Thank you kindly, Johnny."

"He heard that all right," said Sleepy to Fat.

"Hell, he hears when he wants to." The ex-deputy grinned. "You say you never found Tony in town?"

"No, we never found him. Walsh thought he was back here by this time."

"He shore must have got some triple distilled tequila," said Johnny. "I've seen 'em fermentin' that maguey stuff in bullhide vats, and there was a scum of scorpions, centipedes, and tarantulas on the top of it. Man, what a kick that stuff must have!"

"Gives it age," said Fat. "Track annihilator."

"What's that?" asked Johnny.

"Why, you pour it in a man's tracks, after he's been gone a week, and bring him home unconscious. Fact; I've seen it done."

"What didja say?" asked Whisperin'.

"I said that your lip was still swelled up from where Rickson hit you."

The old man nodded thoughtfully.

"I wish I knowed where he was."

"Who?"

"Cloudy. You was talkin' about him, wasn't you?"

Johnny nodded.

"I reckon we might as well start supper," he said. "I was figurin' on Tony makin' us some *enchiladas* for supper."

WALSH, Fat and Hashknife were eating supper in the Chinese restaurant, and talking things over, when Bud Ferris came in. He was so excited that he nearly knocked over a table in crossing the little room.

"Ray Holden and Art Rommel jist rode in from my place, and they found Tony Conejo down near where my road forks!" he announced.

"Drunk?" asked Walsh.

"Dead! Shot twice, so the boys say. They never touched him. Ray's dog found him."

"Shot twice, eh?" said Walsh slowly. "Old Tony—down near your road. Why, that's four, five miles—"

"From where he was to meet that stage," finished Hashknife.

"That's right," said Walsh.

He got up and walked over to the door. Ray Holden had followed Ferris, and came in as Walsh reached the door.

"Ferris told you, didn't he, Walsh?" asked Holden, a grizzled old cowboy. Walsh nodded shortly.

"My dog found him. Mostly allus he follers us down to the forks, and I have to send him back. He gits down here and fights with the town dogs. This time he found somethin' off the road and started barkin'; so we rode over to see what he had. Thought mebbe he had a rattler."

"It was Tony Conejo, eh?"

"It shore is. Flat on his back, shot twice. We never touched him, except to be sure he was dead, Walsh."

Walsh's expression was bitter as he came back to the table and sat down.

"We'll go down there later and meet the sheriff," he said. "Better take some lanterns along. Why would anybody kill that poor old Mexican? Why, he never done any wrong to any man.

"And he could shore make good *enchiladas*," added Walsh seriously.

Hashknife ate slowly, thoughtfully, taking no part in the conversation. His mind was working swiftly, trying to find a reason for the murder of Tony Conejo. What was Tony doing that far down the road, when Walsh had told him to come right back to the ranch after delivering the note?

That was the third murder in a short space of time—Jim Woods, Erv Corbett and Tony Conejo. Woods had been battered beyond recognition, identified mostly by his clothing. At least three men had chased Corbett to his home ranch, killing him with a hail of rifle bullets. And now Tony Conejo, riddled and left in the brush beside the road.

Henry Ashby, the marshal, came in. He had heard the news.

"I reckon old Whisperin' went out to your place, Ed," he told Walsh. "He was cripplin' around here, packin' a big gun, and my hunch was that he was goin' to choose Jeff Rickson. I told him he was a fool to even think of such a thing; so he saddled his horse and went down the road."

"Still lookin' for Cloudy?" Holden smiled.

"Yeah, I suppose he is," said Henry. "But I guess Cloudy hit the grit out of the country."

Hashknife looked up quickly.

"When did Cloudy leave here?" he asked.

Henry rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"I dunno exactly, Hartley. When was it?"

"Was it after the stage robbery?"

"Oh, yeah—quite awhile after."

"Was it after Jim Woods was killed?"

"Lemme see. Hm-m-m-m. If I remember right, Whisperin' was lookin' for Cloudy—no, I ain't just sure."

"The day we buried Jim Woods, Whisperin' asked me if I'd seen Cloudy," said Walsh. "It was either just before or just after the burial."

"You don't figure old Cloudy had anythin' to do with that stage robbery or the murder of Jim Woods, do you?" asked Henry.

"I never knew Cloudy," replied Hashknife. "Was him and Whisperin' workin' for Rickson at the time of the robbery?"

"They both was," replied Henry.

"But they'd quit Rickson at the time Jim Woods was murdered."

"That's right."

"What sort of a lookin' person was Cloudy?"

"Jist ordinary," said Henry. "He was about five feet eight inches tall and would weigh mebbe a hundred and seventy. He had kinda faded hair. Didn't wear no hair on his face. I'd figure him mebbe fifty-five year of age. Wouldn't you, Ed?"

"About that," answered Walsh.

"Did you see the gold Jim Woods brought out, Walsh?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah. He shore had it, Hashknife. But he said it was in a hell of a place. I think it was back in the Lava Beds, and if hell is any hotter, or any dryer, I'm goin' to live good the rest of my life. I think Jim got lost and found the mine. There ain't no water in that country. Jim had a couple burros when he left here, but he didn't bring any back. He was kinda loco for several days—but he shore had gold ore."

"Gold with a little ore in it," said Henry dryly.

"That's right. Most any man would sell his soul for a mine like that. Red gold. I tell you, I had a hard time makin' myself keep out of them Lava Beds. That stuff is shore a magnet."

IT WAS after nine o'clock that evening when the group of men went down to wait for the sheriff at the forks of the Walking Y road. They carried lanterns. Jack Bonham, of the JB, went along, as did Ferris and his two men. Hashknife spent some time in examining the body by the light of a lantern, while the rest of the group watched him; but he made no comments.

At 9:45 the sheriff and the coroner came along. They drew up at the lanterns and were told what had happened. The coroner was a friend of Ed Walsh, and knew the old Mexican. He made his examination and ordered the sheriff to have the body taken to Dancing City. One of the men offered to bring a wagon out from town to get the body, and the coroner told him also to bring the wagon out to the Slash Bar 7, stating that the county would pay for the hauling.

Contrary to expectations, the sheriff wanted to go first to the Slash Bar 7; so they all trailed out there. The sheriff appeared to know he was in hostile company, so said little. He questioned Walsh about Tony Conejo and asked Walsh to explain about the killing of Erv Corbett.

Walsh introduced Hashknife to the

coroner, Dr. McCann, an old range physician, who seemed a kindly soul. Hashknife told him what he had seen of the killing at the ranch, and the old doctor shook his head sadly.

"You'll be down for the inquest, of course," he said.

"Doc," said Hashknife, drawing the doctor aside, "you're a friend of Ed Walsh, I understand."

"I've known Ed a good many years, Mr. Hartley."

"That's fine. Will you do Ed a big favor?"

"I'd be mighty glad to do anything possible for Ed."

"This may sound funny to you, Doc; but it ain't. You will be in charge of this inquest tomorrow, won't you?"

"I will; at ten o'clock in the morning."

"Will you demand that Ferris, Bonham and Rickson bring every cowboy on their ranches to the inquest? Walsh only has one left, and it's a cinch he'll be there."

The doctor looked curiously at the tall, serious faced cowboy.

"I suppose I could do that, Hartley; but I don't understand—"

"You don't have to explain to 'em. Just say that you want every one of their men at the inquest for questioning. They can't refuse."

Walsh came over to them, and Hashknife told him what he had asked the coroner to do. Walsh did not understand what it was all about.

"I can't tell you—now," said Hashknife. "But will you do it?"

"I will," agreed the doctor. "It surely can't hurt anything. Most of them would be there, anyway."

After every one was gone that night, Walsh tried to question Hashknife.

"Don't waste your breath," advised Sleepy. "I've knowed him over ten years and he ain't never answered a question yet."

Meanwhile, down in Dancing City there was considerable comment over the coroner's orders that every cattleman bring in all his cowboys. No one had objected to the order, but they were all curious. The sheriff did not know the reason, nor would the coroner explain.

"What the hell's the idea, Pelkey?" asked Rickson indignantly. "Have I got to pull all my men off the job and bring 'em down here?"

"That's the coroner's orders," said the sheriff. "He won't tell me why."

"Suppose I don't do it?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Jeff; old McCann is stubborn as hell. It would be jist like him to stop the inquest and send for warrants. You see, this inquest stuff is serious, and he'd enforce it."

"Well, all right. I can't bring Pete Larabee in, 'cause he's got a injured leg. Horse fell with him. You tell McCann about that, will you?"

"Oh, sure. He won't drag no cripples. I notice that Hartley, Stevens and Fat are out at the Slash Bar 7."

"I wondered where they went. Whisperin' is out there, too, ain't he?"

"I believe he is. I hear he started gunnin' for you."

"He didn't git far." Rickson laughed. "It would be a shame to kill the old fool, but I wouldn't take any chances on him shootin' me."

"It was kinda funny about that old Mexican gettin' shot, Jeff."

"No, I don't think it was funny. These Mexicans are always havin' trouble among themselves."

"He took that note down to the stage all right. Oscar told me he got it from the Mexican at the forks of the Slash Bar 7 road. Tony must have been headin' for the Walkin' Y when he got shot. He was near their road."

"That's right," agreed Rickson. "I wonder if he ever had trouble with any of the Walkin' Y."

"I never heard if he did. Hell, you never can find out anythin'. As far as that goes, they'll never find out who killed Corbett."

"Of course they can't. You've got to find out a reason for a killin', before you can put the deadwood on anybody. All

they know is that three or four men chased Corbett to the ranch and shot him. Nobody knows why they chased him. They tell me that Hashknife Hartley is a range detective. Let him chew on this one."

"He won't get far, Jeff. Well, I think I'll hit the hay. I'm gettin' tired of inquests."

AT FOUR o'clock the next morning Hashknife, Sleepy and Fat were eating breakfast at the Slash Bar 7. Neither Sleepy nor Fat knew why Hashknife had routed them out of bed that early, although Hashknife had told Walsh that they would probably have an early breakfast.

Hashknife did not explain where they were going. They saddled their horses in the dark, and Hashknife led the way down the road. Walsh and Johnny ate breakfast together at eight o'clock. They were due at the inquest at ten o'clock, and Hashknife had asked Walsh to speak to the coroner about the inquest over Tony's body. Hashknife pointed out the fact that Oscar Neal was probably the last person to see the old Mexican alive, and that his testimony would be necessary.

"I dunno," muttered Johnny, adjusting the bandages on his sore head. "That Hashknife feller is queer, don't-cha know it, Ed? Last night he just set there and never paid no attention to anybody. We was all a-talkin', but I'll betcha he never heard a word we said. And all to once he kinda jerks himself almost out of the chair, and says, like he was talkin' to himself, 'Why, of course! Any damn fool ought to have seen that.' "

"I heard him say it," agreed Walsh, pouring more coffee in his cup. "I wondered at the time what was wrong with him."

"I mentioned it to Sleepy," said Johnny. "He just laughed and said we better sharpen our guns. I asked him what was the idea of him and Fat goin' out early with Hashknife, and he said that he didn't know any more about it than I did. I tell you, Ed, Hashknife knows somethin'—and he ain't tellin' what he knows."

"I hope so," said Walsh. "But I don't see how he could. He didn't see any of them fellers, except like we seen 'em. How could he know anythin'? It's a cinch he can't have any idea who killed Tony. He'd shore have to be a mind reader, if he did. And he ain't— Hello there, Whisperin'. Just in time for breakfast."

Old Whisperin' came shuffling in, nodded to them and sat down at the table. Johnny hastened to put on the pancake griddle and the coffee pot.

"I wonder what Hashknife's idea was in havin' all the cowboys at the inquest this mornin'," said Johnny. "Is he goin' to work one of them eenie-meenie-miniemo things, tryin' to find out who's it?"

"I'm goin' to the inquest with you," stated Whisperin'.

"You better stay here and run the ranch," advised Walsh.

"No, I ain't. I'm goin' down there, and I'm packin' a gun."

"You'll get yourself in trouble if you do," said Johnny. "You can't buck Jeff Rickson, Whisperin'."

Whisperin' ignored Johnny's advice and turned to Walsh.

"You got a piece of paper and a pencil?" he asked.

"You goin' to write your will?" Walsh laughed.

"Not me."

Walsh got him the desired articles. Whisperin' cleared a place beside his plate for the sheet of paper. After sucking the point of the pencil for several moments, he began making figures on the paper. After several attempts he looked the paper over with evident satisfaction before handing it to Walsh.

There were no words on the paper; just a number of crudely drawn brands. Walsh stared at them for a moment, lifted his head and looked at the old man, who was pouring syrup over his

stack of steaming wheatcakes.

"Whisperin', how did you know this?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"How did you know this?" Walsh fairly yelled his question.

"It ain't always safe to tell all you know," replied Whisperin'. "Cloudy found it out and told me."

Johnny stepped over beside Walsh, who showed him the paper. Johnny's eyes opened wide, but he went back to the stove without a comment.

"Simple, when you see it drawed out," said Walsh.

"It won't be simple for somebody," said Johnny grimly.

Walsh sat there at the table, deep in thought. Finally he looked up at Johnny.

"We'll keep quiet for awhile," he said calmly. "Let Hashknife work out his ideas first. But there will be a reckonin'."

"Plenty," said Johnny softly.

"I'll help you," said Whisperin'.

"Keep out of it, pardner," advised Walsh. "You've done your part."

"You're too old," added Johnny.

"Huh?" asked Whisperin'.

"You're too old, Whisperin'."

"Oh. I thought you said it was gettin' cold. Don'tcha know it, sometimes I'm scared my ears ain't jist right. They fool me sometimes."

Johnny Bailes laughed softly as he poured more coffee for the old man.

ABOUT nine o'clock the three men rode to Dancing City. It seemed a gala morning in town. Word of the inquest had been broadcast by word of mouth, and it seemed as though every man in that county was in attendance. The hitch-racks were filled with saddlehorses and teams.

Walsh met the sheriff on the street and they discussed a location for the inquest. The local justice of the peace had a small office, but it would not hold a fifth of the crowd. Finally they decided on a vacant store next door to the War Dance Saloon, and chairs were carried from several places on the main street. Dr. McCann agreed that it would be a good thing to delay the inquest over the body of Tony Conejo until Oscar Neal could attend, and agreed to take the matter up with the sheriff.

All the cowboys from the Walking Y and the JB outfits were there, as were all of Rickson's men, with the exception of Pete Larabee. The sheriff saw Walsh, Johnny and Whisperin' ride in, but did not see Hashknife, Sleepy and Fat; so he asked Walsh about it.

"I fully understood the order," stated Walsh. "Every cowman was to bring his crew. Bailes is all I've got left, and he's here. Hartley, Stevens and Fat are not employed by me, and I have nothing to say about what they do."

"But all three of them are supposed to testify," said the sheriff.

"Well, there's plenty time for them to show up, Pelkey. Keep your shirt on."

The sheriff explained the situation to Rickson.

"Walsh is right," said Rickson. "Them three don't work for him. Go and get this inquest over as soon as you can. With this crowd here, we ought to do some business, but there's no use startin' the games until the main attraction is over."

The room filled swiftly as soon as the doors were open. The coroner and the sheriff sat at a poker table and watched the crowd come in. Selection of the jury required only a few minutes, but there was not a cowman or a cowboy on the jury.

There was considerable delay, but finally the inquest was formally opened. After a short conference with the coroner, the sheriff addressed the crowd.

"Has anybody seen Hartley, Stevens and Olson?" he asked.

No one replied.

"What didja say?" asked Whisperin', who had managed to get a seat down in front.

The sheriff ignored his question.

"Call Johnny Bailes to the stand," ordered the coroner.

Johnny bowlegged his way to the front and was sworn. He sat down beside the table and grinned at the audience.

"Bailes, will you tell the jury what you know about the shooting of Erv Corbett?" asked the coroner.

"I'll shore do that little thing," said Johnny. "Erv went over to see if one of our windmills was a-runnin', and some damn rustlers took out after him and—"

"Wait a minute," interrupted the sheriff. "How do you know they were rustlers?"

Johnny's lips shut tightly for several moments and his eyes roved the room.

"I asked you a question, Bailes," reminded the sheriff.

"And I didn't answer it, did I?" retorted Johnny.

"You will please stick to facts," said the coroner.

"I'm stickin' to facts, Doc. If the sheriff will keep his oar out of it, I'll tell what you asked me to tell."

"Let him talk," said Bud Ferris. "If there's rustlers operatin' in this range, we'd like to know about it, wouldn't we, boys?"

The crowd rumbled an assent.

"Go ahead, Johnny," urged Jack Bonham. "Don't mind the sheriff."

"Just a moment!" snapped the sheriff angrily. "If there's any more interruptions, I'll clear the room."

"Talk loud enough so everybody can hear," begged Whisperin'.

The sheriff shrugged his shoulders and the crowd laughed. Plenty of liquor had been consumed, and the crowd wanted amusement.

"Did I come up here to let the folks look me over, or did I come to tell what I know?" asked Johnny impatiently.

"Go ahead and talk," said the coroner. "As far as you calling the murderers cattle rustlers, I can't see any objections. A man who will commit murder shouldn't object to being called a thief. And, anyway, I hope none of them are with us this morning."

"You never can tell, Doc," said Walsh seriously.

"Granted." The coroner laughed. "Proceed with your story, Bailes."

Johnny finished his story without any further interruptions.

"As a matter of fact," said the coroner, "you don't know how many men were in the crowd."

"Enough to fill the air with lead, Doc. I shore bumped my head on a hunk of it."

"You were unconscious when Walsh and the rest arrived?"

"I must have been, 'cause it was all over when I woke up."

"Why do you claim they was cattle rustlers?" asked the sheriff.

"Stick around, Pelkey; mebbe you'll find out."

JOHNNY was excused, and Walsh was called. In spite of the fact that nearly every man in that crowd knew and liked Erv Corbett, they were obliged to laugh at Walsh's description of Hashknife's horse running away and taking him straight to the enemy.

"Walsh," said the coroner, "you'd had Corbett with you a long time. Did you ever know of his having trouble with any one?"

Walsh shook his head.

"I never did, Doc."

"Do you know of any reason for his being killed?"

Walsh shifted in his chair and looked keenly at the interested audience.

"Yes, I do," he said softly.

There was not a sound from the crowd, and Walsh's voice carried to every part of the room. Somewhere a man swore softly.

"But I'm not goin' to tell it here," said Walsh evenly. "Johnny Bailes was right—they were rustlers. I'm namin' no names."

"Are you afraid to name them here?" asked the coroner huskily.

"Would you like to see hell bust loose?" asked Walsh tensely.

Bud Ferris was on his feet, leaning across the back of the man ahead of him.

"Cut it loose, Walsh," he said anxiously.

"Set down, Ferris!" snapped the sheriff. "If Walsh wanted to tell, he'd tell."

"What did he say?" asked Whisperin'. "Speak louder, Pĕlkey."

"He's bluffin'," said some one back in the crowd.

"Shut up back there!" roared the sheriff. "Call the next witness."

Jack Bonham sprang to his feet.

"Wait a minute, Pelkey!" he snapped. "Why excuse this witness? It's time we were doin' somethin'. Walsh says that rustlers killed Corbett. Are we goin' to have three murders and no reckonin'? If Walsh knows somethin', I'd like to know what it is. We're not damn savages. Murder means as much here as it does anywhere else."

"This is an inquest," Bonham," replied the sheriff angrily. "We're not tryin' any cattle rustlers. If you fellers would set down and keep your damn mouths shut, we'd get somewhere."

"You ain't man enough to shut my mouth!" roared Bonham. "What have you done about the murder of Jim Woods? Not a damn thing. Now you've got two more murders. What's this inquest for, anyway? To find out that both men are dead—and let it go at that?"

"Set down, Bonham," said Rickson. "Let the officials finish their business."

"So you've bought chips in this game, have you, Rickson?" queried Bonham.

"I'm merely tryin' to hurry this thing along."

The coroner turned to Ed Walsh.

"Do you refuse to tell who killed Corbett?"

"I can't tell right now, Doc."

"Where are Hartley, Stevens and Olson?" asked the coroner.

"I don't know where they are," replied Walsh.

"Looks kinda funny to me," grumbled the sheriff. "They knew what time this inquest was to be held."

"No question about that," said the coroner. "In fact, it was Hartley who asked me to demand that every cowboy in the country be brought here to the inquest."

"Since when did Hartley start givin' you orders?" asked Rickson sharply.

"That is none of your business, Rickson," flared the doctor.

"Talk to 'em, Doc," shouted one of the Walking Y cowboys.

"Who is this Hartley person?" asked Buzz Allen.

"*Mucho malo hombre,*" replied Ray Holden. "A very bad man."

"Must be a personal friend of Ray's," a cowboy suggested.

"I'll talk to you about that after the services are over," said Holden meaningly.

"Am I goin' to have to clear this room?" demanded the sheriff.

"Might be worth watchin'." A man laughed at the rear of the room.

The coroner shuffled his papers nervously. He knew the temper of these men. They were all watching Ed Walsh closely, wondering what he knew. The coroner wondered if any of the rustlers were in that packed audience. If they were, Walsh was wise in naming no names. He turned to the crowd.

"It seems that we have only the two witnesses," he said huskily, "and the evidence is only to the effect that three or more men chased Erv Corbett to the Slash Bar 7, where they shot him down. It doesn't give the jury much chance to do more than decide that Corbett was killed by parties unknown."

"Same old stuff," said Bud Ferris. "We'll bury the body and the sheriff will ride back to Cobalto."

"What can I do?" snapped the sheriff angrily. "You tell me who done it and I'll jail 'em."

"I'd tell you, if I knew what Walsh knows."

Walsh shifted in his chair and looked

straight at Bud Ferris.

"I may ask you for help, when I tell it, Bud," he said.

"I'm backin' your play, pardner."

Jack Bonham got to his feet again.

"I don't like to keep hornin' in," he said slowly, "but it does seem to me that this inquest shouldn't close right now. I don't expect a sheriff to do impossible things, but I do think that a murder should be investigated. Somethin' should be done. This killin' business is gettin' too damn common around here. When you stop to remember poor old Jim Woods, his head almost beaten off his shoulders and—"

"Gawd a'mighty!" screamed a voice near the doorway. A chair crashed into splinters. The crowd whirled toward the doorway.

Old Jim Woods, dirty and whiskered, his skin the color of wood ashes, was coming down the center aisle, his face twisted painfully as he hobbled along, like a man with wooden feet.

His lips were working, but no sound came from them. The men on the aisle shrank back, staring at the ghost of a man they had buried in the little graveyard on the hill. A drunken cowboy surged to his feet, put both hands over his eyes and fell back into a chair, which gave way with a crash.

The sheriff and coroner backed away, as Jim Woods came toward them. He was like a cripple walking in his sleep.

"Hello, Pelkey," he said, and his voice was like a rusty hinge.

The sheriff backed away. The crowd were all on their feet, speechless with amazement.

A gunshot crashed out, thundering like a cannon. Jeff Rickson swung up his right hand, clutching a heavy revolver, but his fingers unclasped from around the butt as he pitched forward in a heap. Old Whisperin' Wilson was on his feet, smoke trickling from the muzzle of the .45 Colt in his right hand. He laughed cacklingly.

"You can hit old men, but you can't shoot no ghost, Rickson," he said.

Buzz Allen grabbed for Rickson as he fell, but missed him. The room was in an uproar. Hell had broken loose and they knew it. Men were fighting to get outside. A window crashed out, when Shorty Long threw a chair through it. With Blue Moon behind him, they started climbing out into the alley.

A voice yelled from the alley. Long was out, and Moon was swinging his legs over the sill. A gun crashed twice. Moon fell back into the room, gripping his gun tightly. He whirled on the sheriff and coroner, as he backed toward the doorway, now almost clear of men.

There were more shots outside. Jim Woods was staring vacantly around, and Whispering was going toward him. Moon, backing toward the doorway, whirled suddenly and darted for the opening; but a long, lean body came in a diving tackle from just outside, caught Moon around the hips and they went down with a jarring crash.

A moment later they were up, whirling around. It was Hashknife Hartley, hatless, his shirt torn, but with his powerful arms encircling Moon, who had lost his gun. Slowly a long arm slid up and around Moon's neck.

"Be good, feller," panted Hashknife, "or I'll take you apart."

"I quit," choked Moon. "Gawd, don't do that ag'in!"

Hashknife shoved him against the doorway, loosed him suddenly and shoved the muzzle of a gun against his body. Sleepy came running, and behind him surged the crowd. Fat Olson stuck his head through the broken window and yelled:

"All out? Hell, I only got me one—Shorty Long!"

The sheriff looked down at Rickson and came toward the doorway, his face colorless. The coroner came behind him, talking to himself.

"Hey!" yelled Whisperin' Wilson. "This ain't no damn ghost—it's Jim Woods! I—I jist felt of him, and he's alive!"

"Tonto Smith got away," panted

Sleepy. "He's headin' north."

"Let him go," said Hashknife.

Men were crowding in, demanding to know what it was all about. The postmaster shoved his way through, hatless, panting heavily.

"That—that girl never went away!" he blurted. "She's here."

The crowd were craning their respective necks for a glimpse of Jim Woods and Whisperin' Wilson, who were still down there beside the body of Jeff Rickson.

"Gawd, it looks like Jim Woods!" blurted a cowboy. "I don't believe in ghosts, but—"

"It's Jim Woods," said Hashknife.

Ed Walsh forced his way to the front.

"It broke right," he said. "Hartley, that Cross-in-a-Box outfit were stealin' my cows. Whisperin' showed me how they altered the Slash Bar 7 to a Cross-in-a-Box. It didn't make a neat square; but with a runnin' iron you ain't so particular. It would pass inspection—especially with Pelkey ownin' a share of the Cross-in-a-Box."

"They was shore crooked," agreed Hashknife.

"But what about Jim Woods? We all thought he was a ghost."

"I knowed damn well he was," said a Walking Y cowboy.

Hashknife turned to Blue Moon.

"Want to do any talkin', Moon?" he asked.

The ex-gunman of the Rickson outfit looked at his captor through slitted eyes.

"What's in it for me?" he asked hoarsely.

"Not a thing. I've got enough information to hang you, Moon. The rest of your gang are gone. Whisperin' Wilson killed Rickson. Pete Larabee is tied up at the ranch, and Tonto Smith is headin' north. There's only Pelkey and Oscar Neal left."

"Cut out the sheriff," growled Moon. "He's only guilty of bein' a damn fool. He done what Rickson said, that's all."

The sheriff drew a deep breath and looked around. His legs were weak, it seemed.

"Are you a married man?" asked Hashknife. The sheriff shook his head.

"Take your horse and ride north," ordered Hashknife. "There won't be nobody follerin' you — north. Don't never come back to this county. Better give me your badge."

With trembling fingers the sheriff unpinned his badge and gave it to Hashknife.

"And you better ride damn fast, Pelkey," advised Bud Ferris.

The sheriff nodded, as he walked swiftly away.

WHISPERIN' was leading Jim Woods up the aisle, and Hashknife said:

"Some of you take old Jim over to the hotel and have the doctor do some work on his feet. He's been burned all over the legs and feet, and his mind is all off the track."

"Burned?" queried Ferris.

"Yeah. You see, Rickson wanted him to tell where he got the gold."

"Well, who in hell did we bury?" asked Bonham.

"Cloudy."

"I knowed it," said Whisperin'. "The minute I seen old Jim, I knowed they murdered Cloudy. Him and Jim was about the same size. That's why I downed Rickson. Who the hell said I was too old to shoot?"

"That was true," said Hashknife. "They kidnaped Jim Woods and tried to force him to tell. I reckon Cloudy knew too much about Rickson, and it gave them a good chance to do a double job. If Jim had told, they'd have killed him and buried the body.

"Jim Woods wrote to his daughter. I reckon several people knew about it. Rickson knew Woods posted that letter, and Rickson had an idea that Jim Woods might have told her where the mine was located; so Rickson's gang robbed the mail to get that letter."

"For the love of gosh!" snorted

Walsh. "I was in the postoffice with Rickson when Jim Woods posted that letter. But I never gave it a thought."

"How the hell did you know all this?" asked Moon.

Hashknife laughed shortly.

"I dunno—guessed it, mebbe."

"You're a good guesser."

"But who killed Tony Conejo?" asked Bonham.

"Oscar Neal killed him."

"Oscar Neal? But why did he kill the old Mexican, Hashknife?"

"Because there was supposed to be a girl on that stage with him, and Oscar didn't dare let the Mexican tell us that she wasn't there. You see, they thought this girl was Jim Woods' daughter, who came here to teach the school; so they kidnaped her to try and force Old Jim to talk. They forced her to write a note for the hotel man, sayin' that she was leavin' town."

"Doggone, you shore figured things out," said Walsh. "But what was your idea in havin' all the cowboys in town today?"

"So we could raid the Cross-in-a-Box. We wanted the odds in our favor. Pete Larabee is tied up over there. He didn't have no hurt leg. All you've got to do now is wait for the stage and put the irons on Oscar Neal."

"I'll git that whip-poor-will," declared Henry Ashby.

"You better lock this Moon person up, too," said Hashknife.

"I'd love to do it, Hartley. I ain't smart, but I'm strong."

"Moon," said Hashknife, "which one of you fellers killed Corbett?"

"Make a guess," growled Moon. "You're so good at guessin'. It's a good thing for you that things went wrong for us, 'cause you was the next one to be planted."

Henry Ashby led Moon down to the little jail, and the crowd split up to talk it over.

"What about Jim Woods and his gold?" asked Walsh.

Hashknife shook his head sadly.

"I don't believe he'll ever find it again, Ed. You can't torture a man like they tortured him—not an old man—and have him remember things. He's like a little child. I told him to walk down that aisle, but he didn't know what it was for. Didn't even remember me. I heard him speak to the sheriff down there, but it was only a spark of memory."

They walked up to the hotel, where they found the girl talking with the postmaster and the owner of a general store. The girl held out her hand to Hashknife.

"I'm sorry they mistook me for Miss Woods," she said. "I'm sure I never told any one I was Miss Woods. I took one good look at this town and decided that it was no place for an inexperienced waitress; but I didn't intend to leave until I had a talk with Mr. Green."

"You ain't no waitress," said Hashknife.

"I've been telling her about our school," said the postmaster. "She hasn't any certificate, but—"

"Dancin' City ought to take a chance," said Hashknife. "They shore need education."

"And I need the job." The girl smiled.

Sleepy came hurrying down the street.

"Fat and Henry Ashby are goin' to ride down the road and grab Oscar Neal," he said. "They'll take him to Cobalto, 'cause the crowd might take a notion to avenge Tony Conejo. Do we go along?"

Hashknife smiled slowly and looked toward the southern hills.

"It's on our way," he said simply.

A Story of the Spanish Main

COGGED DICE

By J. ALLAN DUNN

"NINE'S the main!"

The dice clicked over the rough tavern table and came to rest. Long Tom Howard, gunner of the *Scourge,* scowled and snarled as he saw the cast—the lowest possible. He had thrown out.

Yankee John Teller chuckled as he shook the whaletooth cubes in the leather cylinder. Most of the gold still left to the buccaneers of the sloop now lay between the two men. They were playing hazard in the common room of The Bag and Bottle, on Tortuga Isle.

"Nine's still the main!" he cried.

It was his privilege to call it. To follow the same number on which an opponent had lost was to flirt with fortune, to flaunt his own success in the face of his adversary. There was little love between the two.

Teller was the only American in that motley crew. He was supercargo, go-between for the men and the commander. He settled the division of loot shares and got two extra lays for his

rating. As chief gunner, Long Tom Howard had one extra lay. He was proud of his ability to sight the stern long tom barker, to set fiery tow to touchhole at the exact moment when the sloop rode a wavecrest; but he would have liked to hold Teller's rank as well. And Teller knew it.

The rattling ivories came to rest. A score of weatherhards craned their necks. A five and a four!

"I make my nick," crowed Teller. "I make my nick again!"

" 'Tis the devil's own luck," growled an envious, coinless buccaneer.

Teller reached with his left hand to collect the stake that left Long Tom Howard flat as a dead fish's bladder. The dice box was still in his right hand. A jewel, red as the blood of a pigeon, booty from a Spanish galleon, flamed on one furred finger. The tips of two other digits were missing, lopped off by a hanger, with the enemy's bulwark for chopping block.

Long Tom ripped out a blasting oath and rose from his stool. He jerked his dirk from its sheath and drove it, fast and hard, through flesh and bones of Teller's grasping hand, deep into the tough oak. He snatched up the cubes.

"Cheat! *Ladrone! Trampista!* Caught at last. I've watched him!" he shouted. "Small wonder he wins all. And if he does this, now, what has he not gulled us out of, as supercargo, using those cubes, when we cast for choice of loot in turn? Nine was my main. I threw out. Nine he called again, and made it. So could I, with his dice."

He tossed them and again they showed a five and four. A sinister murmur swelled from the watching—and losing—freebooters. Long Tom swept up the stake and pouched it.

Teller had no handy weapon. His pistols were aboard. It was a tacit rule of Tortuga taverns to bring no firearms ashore. His own knife was at the small of his back, where he had shoved it for free play with the dice.

There was the blade that held him, pinned down like some moth catcher's specimen. The nerve shock of steel, rasping through the metacarpals, severing veins and scraping nerves, was not slight. It sickened his stomach, blurred his sight for the moment. Yet that alone would not have halted Teller, first to board, to match cutlass with boarding pike or rapier, to gut a man while the reek of the other's powder was in his nostrils and the lead seared his flesh.

The eyes of his comrades coldly accused him. They believed him guilty. Others also, women and men, entertainers and patrons of The Bag and Bottle.

Long Tom jeered him, his taunts flavored with breath that stank as it hissed between tobacco fouled teeth.

"Come mates," said Howard. "Let's out o' this. We'll go to The Black Flag and make a night o' it. Here's your gold, and mine, and that cozener's. It goes into one pot, and we spend it. Let's drift."

It was a shrewd move. The men of the *Scourge* surged out behind him. The others fell away from where Teller stared at his transfixed hand, the knife, the dice that Long Tom, in a last, contemptuous gesture, had left on the table.

He yanked the dirk from flesh and wood, and blood spattered in red rain from his palm upon the table top. Teller regarded it darkly.

Fingers touched his elbow. He turned to look at the girl who stood there. A comely wench, though her eyes were hard and her mouth seemed to hold the steady taste of bitterness.

"You must have that dressed," she said.

"He lied," said Teller slowly, talking to himself. "He lied. He juggled those dice. They are not mine. You doubt me?" he asked her fiercely, meeting her gaze.

"I doubt it not," she answered. "I have seen Long Tom play tricks before —with cards and dice and with women. But the wound must be taken care of. Come with me."

Teller regarded her closely. He had noticed her before, though his heart had then been set on gambling, not on women.

A slip of a lass. The crown of her poll of red-gold hair would barely reach the height of his heart. He did not bother overmuch with wenches, save when the longing for them caught him, swept him off his feet with drink spurred desire.

Women looted a buccaneer, even as he looted Spaniards. This one was sightly; she had danced and sung well enough. And she had a pert manner that was both beckoning and aloof.

Now that attitude had vanished. Her eyes, green as the heart of a mid-channel wave against the sun, fringed with black lashes, showed sympathy.

He wanted none of it. Only to even the score with Long Tom, the envious, crafty gunner. To fight him in a buccaneer duel, with a circle traced on the sand; to get hands about the gunner's throat, to prove to his fellows he had never cozened them. That—and just that!

Still, the girl was right about the hand.

There were her slim, long fingers in the hollow of his arm.

"Come," pleaded the girl. "Old Lydia, the cook, knows simples. She can stop the flow. Check the fever. Come—if the blade was dirty you may lose your arm."

Teller picked up the cheating cubes and thrust them into the pocket of his breeches.

"Why do you bother?" he asked gruffly, the while he was sensible of some true desire within her to help him; and yet suspicious of it, suspicious, in that hour, nursing his own desire for revenge, hugging it.

There was a gleam in her eyes of which she gave Teller the merest glint. For all his wound, he felt it fire him.

Once more she was La Milagra of The Bag and Bottle. La Milagra! The Wonder!

"If you do not know, I shall never tell you," she replied. "Come with me."

HAIR like spun mint-gold. Like the rich shining of the sun rising above the rim of the sea. Eyes like the heart of a wave, with the sun shining through it. Those sea-green eyes had shown sympathy—and more.

These matters shuttled through the weaving tapestry of Teller's delirium as he tossed on a bed upstairs in The Bag and Bottle, his bandaged hand swollen out of all shape, fire in his veins, his blood scalding, fever burning him up, wasting him.

His arms lay on the coverlet. He could not lift the left one. The pith was out of it. He could not move his fingers, but he seemed to feel a core of agony in the pierced palm.

Sunshine came through the open window with a salty tang. He feebly raised his right forearm. That hand was lean and the sun reddened the wasted flesh about the bones. But there was no flash of jewel. The ring was gone!

The girl had it! No lack of chivalry prompted the thought. It was born of experience. A tavern wench who had pretended to be sorry for him. 'Twas to be expected, yet he was disappointed, beyond the loss of the gem, for there had seemed something in those emerald eyes of hers that—

There were footsteps on the steep stairs and suddenly he knew that he was hungry. The urge of life was in him.

Long Tom—to get even with Long Tom! Aye, he'd get well for that, if all the queeds of hell aligned against him.

His cheeks and chin were bristling with an inch or more of beard that he touched as he brought up his right hand. Give him food, and then . . .

"You're sheer, you dupe," an inner voice told him. "In debt to Thompson of The Bag and Bottle. Your ruby's gone. Lucky if you get food enough to.

strengthen you so you can get a berth aboard some piddling outfit."

He was branded as a cheat. All Tortuga knew it!

He could hear the wash of the tide on the pebbly beach far below. He saw a gull soaring past the open casement against the sky, soaring and dipping. Free!

Some roistering, reckless Brethren of the Coast stamped out of the tavern door below, staggering down the rocky way to the little deep water haven, chanteying as they went.

> Oh 'twas a thousand pities,
> Better lads were never seen;
> A-warblin' dismal ditties
> 'Neath the Deadly Nevergreen.

The Deadly Nevergreen! The horse foaled of an acorn! The tree that bears yearlong fruit! The gallows! It was likely to be the end of him, if France chanced to make peace with Spain. Or the British. There were more British frigates than American in these waters. His own country might string him for a pirate if they caught him at a wrong moment. The freebooters did not bother about letters of marque these days. Things were too chancy. You never knew which way the French cat might jump.

But with Teller and his fellows, memories of comrades in Spanish subsea prisons on Cuba, their bones twisted on the rack, their minds and their souls tormented by the cowled Inquisitors, still held. The galleons were laden with cargoes gathered by wretched Indian slaves. It was freeman against despot. And the devil take the loser.

It was the girl who entered, bearing a tray. From it there came savors that made Teller's mouth water, the while he was conscious of his unshaven beard. How long had he been out of his senses? Where was the *Scourge*?

The questions crowded hotly to his lips as she set down the tray and placed a finger to her own lips, bidding him eat.

"The chirugeon who bled you this morning said you would wake hungered," she said.

"Bled me? No wonder I am weak. How can I eat one handed?"

She solved that problem for him, one slender, strong right arm about him as she raised him after she had cut his meat.

"Thompson takes all this from my ruby, I suppose?" he said.

"Not yet."

She fished a ribbon from between her breasts and took from it the ring. It pulsed in the sunshine, made a vagrant stain on the coverlet.

"I took it," she told him, "before Thompson could."

"You are Spanish?" he asked her.

"God forbid! I am called La Milagra, but my mother was pure Creole, my father Irish. I come from Louisiana."

"*La belle créole,*" said Teller. He, like all sea-rovers, had a smattering of tongues.

She took it gravely, not as flattery.

"I am glad if you think so," she said. "Now you must eat and get strong, so that your arm will heal."

"My arm?"

She nodded.

"The chirugeon, Ravel, had to take off your hand to save your arm. That was like the trunk of a tree, blood red. The poison bit into your heart. He was a dirty one, that Howard. His knife was foul."

No hand. No hand!

She had coaxed him to eat most of his meal. He did not want the rest. He knew now why he could not move his fingers, the globe of fire that had seemed to center in his palm was ghost flame. One-handed!

Suddenly he looked at her and laughed, a hard laugh, but not a forced one.

"I have a bigger debt to collect than I had thought," he said. "You know Pierre Laval, the smith?"

She nodded, marveling at the quick light in his eyes, the swift lift of his jaw,

like the fiddlehead of a ship against the tide.

"Go get him. I have still my right hand, my ruby—and you!"

Those last words surprised him. They seemed to come without his will. Pierre could make him a steel hook, the ruby would pay his scores, go further; but what did he, John Teller of the seas, want with a woman? Even if she had nursed him, saved his jewel from the plundering grasp of Thompson, the tavern keeper, the land pirate.

What indeed?

YANKEE TELLER sat moodily on the rocky base of the tower the buccaneers had built on the western headland of Tortuga, from which to sight Spanish vessels or to cheer home one of their own ships, shot riddled in hull and spars and canvas, limping back with wounded men aboard, dead men left behind, but booty in the hold.

Across the sparkling run of the Windward Passage Teller saw the purple height of Cape Maysi, Cuba. A smart breeze ruffled the intense blue of the water, whipped the crests into white bonnets below which there flashed the dazzle of the sun from the ever changing hollows, like the coruscation of faceted sapphires.

Flying fish shot clear of the surface on widespread, quivering pectorals, planing frantically to escape the pursuing dolphins. There was a sudden flame that came and went in the southwest, the shine of light from the high poop of a galleon, its canvas strained before a reaching wind, making up from South America, or the Isthmus. There might be a rich cargo aboard, gems, gold and silver ingots, or it might only be laden with quinine, though there would always be pickings.

Bound for Havana, doubtless. The big galleons did not like the Yucatan Channel; well manned, well metaled, they preferred the risks of piracy to the reefs.

Now Teller saw two flecks on the horizon, like slivers of pearl. They headed fast, leaning hard alee. They had come from the great bay of Haiti's western shoreline, swooping out whence they had lurked at Gonaive Island. They were after her. After the galleon. Out to singe the beard of the king of Spain once more. And Teller was fettered to land, without a ship, with little money, wasted by fever from infection and the crude, if efficient, surgery of the French chirugeon.

He looked at the substitute for a hand that Laval, the smith, had made under his instructions. A socket of leather laced to his wasted forearm that was slowly healing but still tender at the stump. Set in the socket was a hook of steel. It still irked him to do much with it; the severed veins and arteries, pitch seared, had not yet taken up their new courses completely; though it was mending.

The surgeon, the smith and his score at The Bag and Bottle had eaten up much of the proceeds of the ruby. Thompson had driven a hard bargain with him. He still had some coins to chink, but they would not last long. And there were the sea wolves after their quarry, and he was out of it.

The girl came round the watch tower. Her shapely feet were bare, her red-gold hair blew free from under the kerchief she had bound about her head.

She shaded her brows with her curved hand, watching the chase. The galleon was going about, heading to the wind. Close hauled though she must sail, she preferred the shorter trip to Santiago to the long, fighting flight about Maysi, along the north of Cuba, with those biters on her flank.

The smaller craft tacked with her, hunting in couple, one on either quarter. They might have a long nine aboard each of them, but their guns were squibs against the galleon's battery. They sought to close in where the Spaniard's cannon could not be depressed enough to rake them, to forge alongside, then

to board, scrambling up the scrollwork, over bulwark and through boarding net, cutlass against pike or rapier, pistol against harquebus or muskets in the fighting tops.

Teller's eyes kindled. The girl's hand fell on his shoulder, gripping it.

"The Don serves his guns well," muttered Teller. "They shirk, the dogs. And here I sit on the beach like a caw handed, one-armed rum gagger!"

The sound of guns came faintly down the wind. The galleon held them off.

"Board her, you fools!" said Teller. "You can't take her by popping at her."

Twice the buccaneers closed in and sheered away. One lost a mast. They were Dutch galliot rigged, with great mainsails, long boomed and short gaffed, two jibs and a jigger, quick handling, half decked craft. All three vessels dwindled; they looked like cockboats; like children's toys. And still the sea brethren lacked heart to board, or found the fire too fierce.

Teller stood up for better view. His arm—the left one with the hook—went about the strong and slender waist of La Milagra. She clasped it just below the elbow, her scarlet lips drawn back, her teeth showing like chosen pearls, her supple body tense.

"They waste powder," growled Teller. "There's but one way. Dons can not stomach cold steel."

"They hang on," said the girl. "You should be with them."

For the first time he seemed really to sense her presence, turning to her.

"I'll do it yet," he said. "I'll own my craft. The arm heals. Give me a pinnace and I'll take a pink. Give me a pink and I'll snatch a billy-boy. Then will blue whistlers fly and sharp steel scrape. I'm crippled, lass, but I'm not badly crimped. Wouldst go with me?"

"I find no fault with your arms, lopped or not," she told him. "They did not clip your spirit. But would you command a moll-ship? 'Tis bad luck, they say, to have a woman aboard."

"I'll run my own ship, when I get one," he boasted grimly, "in my own way."

Teller lapsed into moodiness again. His dreams of fortune, of evening the score with Long Tom Howard, soon faded. Luck had been all with Howard. The *Scourge* had lived up to her name. They had captured two rich prizes, the word had come to Tortuga, though they had not. They were roistering in Port Royal and Nassau. The British were friends again with France for a little while. Pirates with French protection papers were no longer gallows meat in Jamaica or the Bahamas.

Howard was neither gunner nor supercargo. The captain of the sloop had been killed, run through by a Spanish officer whom Howard had immediately sent down with a split skull from an ax. The crew had made him skipper of the *Scourge*.

A good gunner, but a cheat and a liar; a strong fighter, but a crafty one. A fair enough seaman, but no navigator, no true leader. A cur and, at heart, a coward, Yankee Teller told himself. He had those cogged dice Howard had palmed off to win the stakes and discredit Teller. He carried them always in his pocket. Some day . . .

The chase was gone, out of sight, all three of them, around Punta Calmanera.

THE nine men who crawled out of the damaged longboat were in sorry case. They matched their blistered, splintered craft. Water had leaked into that from opened seams, and blood had leaked out of them. They were half blind from sunblink, their lips festered, their tongues like dried mushrooms, their cracked and blistered bodies were full of sores. They were more than half naked. They had had no drink, save half a dozen coconuts, for four days; no meat for seven, and before that only raw turtle. Ten days' beard was on them. There was but the stump of a mast and one oar to steer or scull. Their rail was broken and so was the spirit of them. Currents and fickle winds had drifted

down the length of the Bahamas, from Andros to Great Inagua, until a freak tide hade sent their keel grating on the shingle at Tortuga.

They told, when they were able to, a rambling and disconnected series of tales. There had been a mutiny, they had been put off with only stale water and a keg of salted pork.

They were brethren of the beach, they claimed, and there were nine nationalities, nine languages among them, with almost as many colors of skin, from white through yellow to brown and so to black. British, Dutch, Portuguese, Lascar, Chinese, Finn, Carib halfcaste, French, and one who said he was a Greek but looked more like a Jew. The last was their chief spokesman and had been their supercargo.

Thompson could not refuse to give them meat and drink, but he drew small ale and served moldy cheese and maggoty biscuit in churlish fashion. More than the first scurvy meal he would not contribute. Times were hard, he said, viewing hard faced their plight. They were brethren of the beach, indeed.

Yankee Teller strode in and saw them, heard their mumbled yarns. He had already seen their boat. Here were nine men, lusty enough if well nourished. They had but three hangers and two chargeless pistols among them, aside from their sheath knives. And they were a very proper set of villains. Dogs who would snarl and bite, and needed leash and collar. Dogs who must be taught to know a strict master. He bought them better food with tankards of the stiffest ale and, after they were bellyful and smoking in some comfort, Teller ordered special liquor to be served, cups of port and brandy mixed, known as blood-and-thunder.

"You'll soon beggar yourself if you play host to these rogues," said Thompson.

"I've paid your shot. I'll leave no chalkscore when I go," retorted Teller. "Now, lads, you're beached. I'm none too far ahead of you, but I've enough to buy a few stores, to overhaul that longboat of yours and to put off. There's scant welcome here for brethren who lack the jingleboys. Who's for the sea? Who'll go on the account with me?"

Their burned faces were bloated now with the liquor, their stomachs lined and warmed, also their spirits, by the blood-and-thunder. Yet there was some demur. Two or three grumbled they had had enough of an open boat, sea-tight or not, and Teller scoffed at them.

"You've lost your luck. Let's go and find it, bullies. Ten of us, now, can take a ship by surprise and some fighting. We'll get arms and clothes. And so to fortune by making a bid for 't."

"Who leads?" asked the Britisher.

"I do, you ingrate!" said Teller. "I lead. I take five lays, a supercargo three, a chief gunner two, the others one. All regular and aboveboard."

The Englishman was drunk.

"I can lay a gun wi' any one," he boasted, "but I'm damned if I care to serve a one-handed man."

Teller reached out with his steel claw and hooked the malcontent through the collar and shoulder of his tarry canvas jacket and yanked him to his feet. The anvil forged steel bit into his flesh and scraped the bone.

"You dog!" roared Teller. "What's wrong with this one? Or with this?"

He fetched the other such a buffet with his closed fist that the man fell senseless, his head struck the floor like the blow of a big drum. Teller paid no more heed to him. Here was his chance. He seized it. Made his talk.

"Eh, Main-de-fer, I join weeth you," said the Frenchman, and the pact was made.

Yet it was a sorry outfit that went a-cruising without definite aim, since they could not afford to stay ashore. A desperate lot, as food and water dwindled and once again it seemed they might become derelicts. It was the ninth night out when, hiding behind Cape Dame Marie on Haiti, they saw a trading billy-boy making bare steerage

way at sunset. They rowed swiftly toward her.

They set themselves alongside with muffled oars and swarmed her side, a pack of half armed ragamuffins who made swift capture. It was no great prize, but it sufficed. Within three months they had changed ships as many times. The last was a brigantine of ten carronades with a long muzzled barker fore and aft; a swift sailer and ready handler, well found and well manned, for they had made recruits from captured craft, marooning those who would not join.

Teller renamed his brigantine the *Main*, though whether that title stood for the sea they ranged, the hand of Teller or a cast at dice, to symbolize adventure, none but their skipper ever knew.

Five times the *Main* made a port within a few hours, a day or so at most, of the departure of the *Scourge*. Now they were welcome at Tortuga when they tossed their Spanish spankers on the counters and took the wenches on their knees, while the fiddles scraped and whined, and they howled the chantey chorus of Main-de-fer.

The shore's alee,
The wind blows free;
Haul, bully boys, haul!

Listen to the surf on Dead Man's Reef,
Hearken to the roar on Galleon's Grief,
Haul, bully boys, haul!

In the wind! We're about.
There's the Point and we're out;
Away to the open sea.

We've a skipper aboard with a Hand of Steel,
And his iron claw's set to the spokes of the wheel.
See the galleon lift! She's adrift, she's adrift!
And the coral grips her keel.

We have herded her in
And, like Sons of Sin;
Haul, bully boys, haul!
While men fall dead and scuppers run red
And the hungry sharks a full meal are fed;
We'll take our loot
And we'll drink, to boot,
A health to the Hand of Steel.

IT WAS just before dawn when the turtler came rushing in, eager for reward. His news had been blazed by bonfires across Haiti, over the ridges from south to north, and he had relayed it by boat to Tortuga.

The great galleon *Nuestra Señora de Valencia,* long expected from the Philippines, homing to Spain, packed with the treasure of the Orient, due to call at Havana, was sighted at last. It had taken two hours, perhaps, for those urgent tidings to be flashed and finally brought in by the turtler. Meanwhile the galleon was well off Calmanera, bucking the current, with only a fitful wind to help her. The wind would doubtless rise with the sun, but there was ample time to strike.

Teller was exultant. There would be soldiers aboard to do the fighting, protected with casques and corselets, led by haughty Dons in body armor. There would be musicians, there would be priests. There would be batteries of culverins and serpents. But, above all, there would be booty.

The waist of the galleon would be high above the rail of the *Main,* her poop would tower over the brigantine's futtock plates. It would be like a kingfisher attacking an eagle; but they were reckless of odds as they went trooping down to their ship, torches blazing in the last of the night. The tide served them and it had still two hours to run against the Spaniard, but they had to tow her out to catch the wind and then, with its freshening, as the stars paled and the sky turned from gray to olive, from green flushed with olive to bright, clear cerulean, they sped through the passage.

The girl was aboard, as she had always been since Teller won his first hooker from the patched longboat. By day she dressed as a man, not for disguise, but handiness. She pulled and hauled, led a chantey, coiled down. In a fight she served as powder monkey. Aft, when the lanterns were lighted, she

dressed like a court lady and played the guitar and sang for Teller. Sometimes she danced for the men, bolero or fandango, to their delight. This was no moll-ship. She had brought them luck.

Pikes and axes were brought and stacked, sharpened with cutlasses and dirks until every edge and point would drive through bone. Pistols were loaded, primed, and the pans protected. Shot was piled, quickmatch for priming and slowmatch for firing were placed handy. Teller had a baldric belt in which he had six pistols, all of them taken from prizes. Two were silver mounted dags that held fixed, saw shaped blades like small bayonets.

He gave no orders for boarding nets or sanded decks. There would be no fighting on the *Main*. By some lucky shot their bow gun might do some harm but their carronades would do little more damage than antiquated falconets. They must lay alongside the galleon, despite her batteries, swarm up the carven sides, leap from their own rigging; then, after the first volley of pistols, it would be cold steel that must do the work.

It would have been much better if they had a consort to split the Spanish fire and the defense, but the less their number the greater the loot, let alone the glory.

They saw her now, making heavy weather of it in the steadily increasing gale. A great sea castle, her rounded bottom foul from tropic seas, her bluff bows squatting deep as the spritsails bellied and bore them down; wallowing along in her own wash, faded designs on her worn canvas, faded pennants and banners flying, tier upon tier of guns, some of whose tompioned muzzles dipped into the sea as she rolled. The gilding on the scrollwork of her poop was tarnished, but she was magnificent; she looked impregnable. Glints came from the armor of her defenders, flashes broke through rings and puffs of smoke, for she was in action. Others besides the men of the *Main* had got the news carried to the buccaneers by fishermen sure of payment for their tale.

Only one vessel against her. A sloop with a great stretch of mainsail, jibs and topsail. She sailed like a witch. As she crested they could see the burst of flame from the long tom in her bows, see through the seaglass where she scored on the galleon. They were trying to hull her waterline, knowing they could outsail her, chancing return from the Spanish upper batteries that thundered now from port and now from starboard, as the sloop crossed the galleon's bows, shot down her run and made a mockery of her.

By all the rules of buccaneering the galleon was the prize of her who first engaged and boarded her, unless that attack was in concert. Those who might help otherwise got their share of loot under sufferance, unless they chanced to turn the fight and save the day.

But Teller meant to have his share of her, and a good one. His eyes kindled as he knew the sloop for the *Scourge*.

He had no quarrel with her crew, once his shipmates. Howard had cozened them. He meant to even score with Howard. If they should quarrel over loot, that might serve, though he clicked the cogged dice in his pocket and fancied himself cramming them down the liar's throat.

As they surged on, he watched the fight. The galleon came on like a great bull, with rising and tossing head, annoyed at the wolf racing beside it, snapping at its tendons. Teller shook his head.

"They should board," he said to the girl. "They are losing men. A lucky shot or two might cripple them. They waste time playing tag. Why— Ah, Howard finds sense at last! He luffs! Now, blind me, look at that!"

The sloop had come up and, with hauled sheets, swooped down on the galleon. She luffed again as the great bow lumbered by, making to overhaul the Don, grappling irons a-swing, men in the stay ratlines, ready to leap, balanced on

bare feet, stripped to the waist, dirk in teeth, cutlass in one hand, pistol in the other.

The Spaniards were firing muskets from their tops; they stood with pikes back of nettings to resist the charge. They had grenades ready and, meantime, their gunners served with desperate haste. The lower tiers were still stopped against the rough sea, the upper ones could be but slightly depressed.

Then the big hulk of the galleon blanketed the sloop, which lost way, though she still came on from sheer momentum. She rose from a watery valley and suddenly her cloud canvas collapsed. A roundshot from a poop gallery gun smashed her mast just below the gaff.

The big sail drooped, the topmast swayed and fell with the crumbling topsail. The forestay went slack, the jibs in flapping confusion. And, as she held on the crest, the Spanish cannoneers got home to her at last. Her black hull was spattered white where the balls had gone in. Her deck was splintered. More men lay still or squirming. She was sinking under them as she fetched up alongside, and the survivors sprang to take the prize or die aboard her, which seemed far more likely. The *Main,* spanking down to the fight, was near enough to hear the yell of the desperate pirates, the defiant cheer of the Dons.

"Howard's botched it," Teller cried. "Now lads, this gives us equal share. Aye, more mayhap. Stand by!"

THE decks of the galleon were a shambles. The planking was slippery with gouts and rivulets of blood. Men lay on them a-sprawl, Spaniards and buccaneers alike. Those who were left were smeared with gore, black with powder smoke, gashed with ghastly wounds. Some were crippled for life, others yet to die. The steel hook of Main-de-fer was stained scarlet. He had made it a frightful weapon.

La Nuestra Señora de Valencia was won, at stiff cost of life on both sides. The men from the *Scourge* had boarded a miniature hell and had been almost wiped out before Teller and his bullies dropped from their rigging to the poop, cleared it and charged the waist.

Howard was alive and seven of Teller's old mates, out of a crew of forty. Teller had eighteen left, not all quite whole, but still available. He had four more aboard the *Main,* after the brigantine had sheered off. The girl should have been there, under his orders, but she was aboard the galleon, her hair smothered in a French bonnet, a crease across her upper arm from a bullet, her shirt red, not with her blood but with that of the officer who had sought to pierce her with his rapier.

Teller had sunk his hook in the Don's neck. Their cowed prisoners had thrown down their arms. The afterguard was herded in the big cabin above the lazaretto, stately with rich rugs, with paintings and carven furniture, with salvers and plates and goblets of gold and silver on a high buffet.

The looting had not yet started. The galleon still held on up the Windward Passage. Teller's best helmsman at the wheel. North, they would find some cay on which to maroon the Spaniards. Teller did not kill in cold blood. His prisoners did not walk the plank. They might perish on some waterless islet, but at least they were given a chance.

He himself was little hurt. There was a cut on one calf from the knife of a man he had trodden underfoot after he had passed his own weapon through the midriff. His left shoulder was slashed, but the wound was shallow. Howard had a bloodstained rag about his head and his ribs had been scraped.

The two faced each other. Howard was sullen. The man he had left maimed in The Bag and Bottle, blackened with a lie, stood smiling at him with his lips, but not with his eyes. But for Teller, Howard and his men would not be alive, or would be lying fettered on their way to rot in Havana dungeons before they were hanged and quartered, if they out-

lasted rack and wheel.

Teller! Main-de-fer! The dog had prospered. And he had three men left to Howard's one. True, Howard's bullies had sailed with Teller, but they had sided with Howard in the tavern.

"What do you figure to do about the ship and the loot, Howard?" asked Teller. "The *Scourge* has sunk, I see."

It was in his mind to keep the galleon and use it as decoy, not to gut and burn or sink it. With the *Main* in the offing they might trap many a well laden merchantman into range.

"The *Scourge* has sunk," Howard echoed. "Therefore I need the galleon. Certain of her crew may prove useful. The others?" he shrugged his shoulders significantly. "This is my ship. I first engaged and boarded her. I will see that you and your men have some share of loot," he added.

Yankee Teller laughed.

"It was board or swim for you," he said. "You came up alee of the galleon and got blanketed. But for us, you'd now be in the scuppers, or the bilboes. We heard of the ship at Tortuga. I'll grant you that you first engaged. We'll say we stand even. Howard, I'll match you for the galleon. I'll throw a main with you and use your own dice. You left them behind you in The Bag and Bottle. I've cherished them against some such sort of meeting."

Howard snarled. He saw the green eyes of the girl mocking.

"If you lose you still have your ship," he said. "If I lose, what have I?"

"I'll give you the same chance you gave me when you left me on Tortuga with my hand like a blowfish from your knife and my name pitched with your lies," said Teller fiercely. He brought out the two dice and juggled them in his palm. "Do we throw?"

"I have no right to dice for my men's shares," Howard fended.

Teller nodded.

" 'Tis right. Though they once turned against me. I'll dice you for our captain's lays, then, Howard; but, if you lose, you serve under me, to what task I set you."

The men were listening. They still guarded the unarmed Dons, but they were keen to hear.

"Throw in the wench," said Howard impudently, "and I'll not dice but fight you. The one who wins, leads. I was first aboard, Yankee Teller."

There was a murmur that was not all in favor of Teller. The pirate law stood high. Teller's own men were none too easy to handle, save as they were carried on the wave of their own emotions. And Americans were not overpopular. Howard had made a shrewd stroke. If he could get a majority in his favor, and win, it was he who would set Teller down, he who would command the brigantine and have his will with the galleon —and the girl.

Teller held her back with a sweep of his left arm. She had her silver handled dagger ready in her hand. He whispered to her.

"Leave this to me, *querida*. I will play an ace against this knave, not a queen."

Obediently she stepped back and put away her weapon, the blade of which needed scouring, though she had polished and whetted it earlier that morning.

"We leave her out of it," said Teller. "And we fight it out. The sooner the better. We can make Manzinella Cay before dark."

"So be it," said Howard. "I did not want the strumpet. If I had won her, I would have given her to my men."

BUCCANEER rules! A ring on the sand and two men inside it, with sword and dagger. The first forced outside to lose.

Nothing on Manzinella Cay but the manchineel-apple bushes, fruitful of poison, rustling palmettos, yuccas and straggling cactus. Land crabs scuttling as the boats beached.

Howard was confident. He had a rapier taken from a Spanish *capitan*, a

blade of Toledo whose tip could be bent back against the hilt. And he knew how to use it. The Yankee was a cutlass man. Muscle against tendon, strength against skill. He had fooled the fellow once with palmed dice. He would fool him again with superior swordplay.

Teller was grim. It was true he preferred a cutlass, but his blade was not ordinary. It curved less and, for six inches from the point, along either side, it was razor edged.

La Milagra watched the proceedings as the combatants stripped to their loose breeches, knee long, their feet bare.

"You have no dagger," she said. "Take mine."

"You forget that I am Main-de-fer," he said. "This hook has been fleshed before now. I do not aim to kill him."

"What? After all he has done?"

"Death is not always quick to those who crave it," he told her and, while she pondered that riddle, strode inside the circle drawn on the soft, level sand with a twig.

There were shadows of the spectators, of the combatants, shifting as they scraped blades. Each sought advantage of the sun. The fierce light glared on their steel, while paler sparks of fire shot from it as they raspingly engaged.

Long Tom Howard found his passados parried by a stubborn wrist. He found also, to his surprise, that Yankee Teller was thrusting, not swinging. Once the unusually straight cutlass sank into his flesh beneath his collarbone. And his pliant steel was forced aside with a vigor he did not fancy.

He nicked the American with his feeling, flickering blade, but he could not get the sun into the other's eyes. This should have been his game, but he was losing at it. There was one trick!

He seemed to stumble. He dropped on one knee and sent his point up fast at Teller's eye as Teller disengaged. But the Yankee's blade came swirling back. It seemed to wrap itself about the rapier and end in a wrench that sent the sword sailing.

Teller stepped back and Howard flung his dagger. It clinked against the hook of Main-de-fer, whose fending left arm flung it far aside.

"Give him his toasting fork again," said Teller.

The men looked at each other, amazed. But the girl's eyes were shining.

Now Teller attacked, inexorable, invincible. His double point scored Howard's breastbone, brought the bright blood. He forced him, stiff steel against supple, ringing hilt to hilt. Again he jarred the rapier from the other's clutch as Howard stepped back, outside the ring.

Yankee Teller looked at him, felt in the pocket of his breech, after he had set his cutlass upright and handy in the sand.

"This time you lose," he said. "I fear me there is little water on this cay, and that brackish. But you may find some. I will leave you a chine of salted pork. And *these*."

He flung the cogged dice swirling over the trodden surface of the sand. They flung long shadows where they fell, but their faces could be read. They had turned up a five and a four.

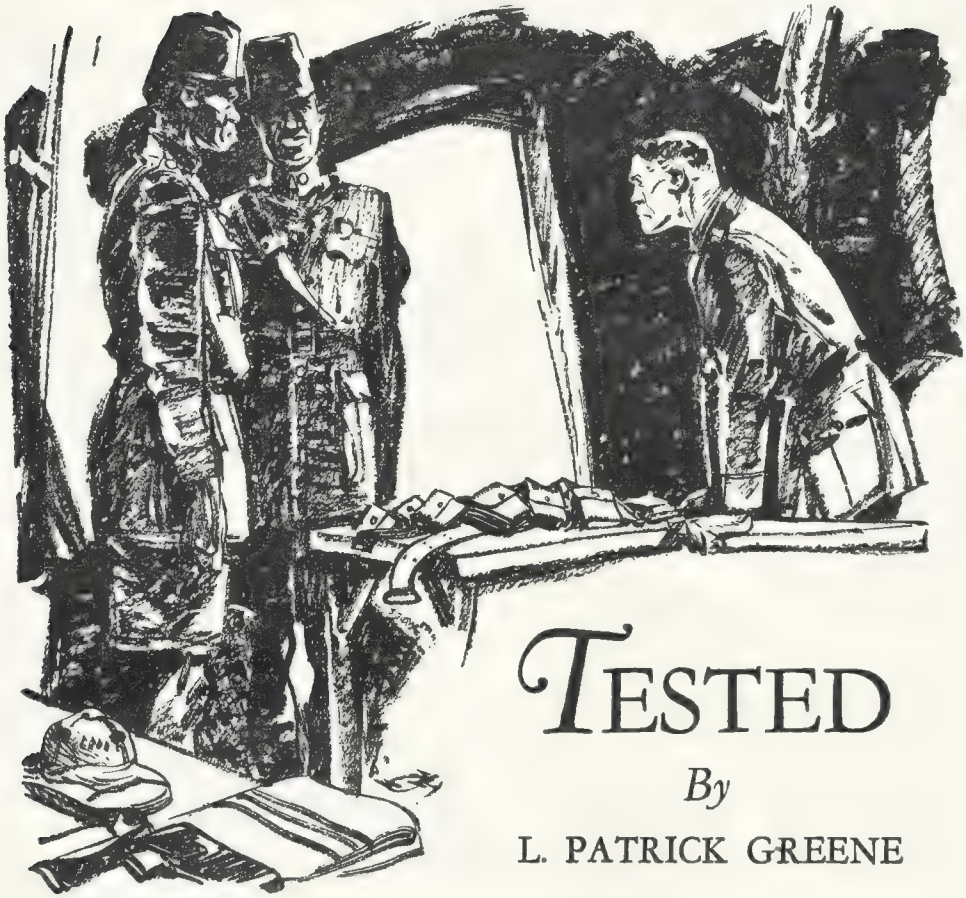
"Nine's your main," said Teller. "Mayhap you can cheat death with them, as you cheated me."

The boats pulled off. They left Howard hunkered on the beach, his head sunk almost to his knees, his eyes glowering in their sockets.

"You should have killed him, you should have run him through," said La Milagra, fiercely. "He called me a strumpet."

"He can always chew a manchineel-apple, if he gets too thirsty," answered Teller. "No turtles haul out on Manzinella Cay. If God is good to tricksters, he may survive. We'll leave it that way. Meantime, we split our lays and sail to Nassau. There is a priest there, sweetheart, and a British chaplain. We'll be married by both. No man calls thee strumpet from now on."

A Story of South Africa



TESTED

By

L. PATRICK GREENE

Said England to the Sergeant, "You can let my people go!"
(England used 'em cheap and nasty from the start.)
And they entered 'em in battle on a most astonished foe—
But the Sergeant he had hardened Pharaoh's heart.
Which was broke, along of all the plagues of Egypt,
Three thousand years before the Sergeant came—
And he mended it again in a little more than ten,
Till Pharaoh fought like Sergeant Whatisname!
(*From "Pharaoh and the Sergeant"*—RUDYARD KIPLING)

RED ruin was loosed upon the land which is Rhodesia. Smoke from burning kraals and settlers' homesteads hovered like a funeral pall above the veld. No transport wagons moved along the dusty roads; the well trodden trails linking kraals together were deserted and, already, were becoming choked by the rank growth of Africa's soil. Settlers, traders, prospectors and hunters concentrated in *lagers* and prepared to sell their lives at a high price.

The *thug-thug* of mine stamps ceased to echo over the veld. Even in the larger settlements all normal business was suspended and the townships turned into armed camps where men

drilled feverishly in the glare of the sun.

Suspicions, rumors and lies polluted the clean air, snaring white and black alike, fogging the issues at stake and postponing the day of reconciliation.

For weeks the trouble had smoldered. The natives had been resentful at the imposition of little understood taxes. There had been cases of official tactlessness and injustice; white men had treated their native servants brutally, and their brutality had been unpunished. There had been an outbreak of East Coast fever which had destroyed so large a percentage of the natives' cattle that the hyenas and vultures were sated and the air was tainted by the stink of rotting flesh.

All this was fuel to a smoldering fire which was finally fanned to a roaring blaze by the prophecies of a hermit witch doctor. He was a man who was gifted with wonderful gifts of oratory, who had a personality which inspired enthusiastic confidence. He was a master of magic and was reputed to be in the confidence of Umlimo, the Great Spirit. It may be that he was only a cunning charlatan; his magic working may have been nothing greater than a few clumsily performed sleight-of-hand tricks. He was undoubtedly a clever ventriloquist.

So it was the voice of Umlimo, coming from the darkest recesses of the cave in which the witch doctor lived, which accused the white men of bringing the disease which had destroyed the cattle. It was this voice which urged the people to rebel against the white men, promising an easy victory.

And this voice, coming after weeks of doubtful indecision, of rumor and counter-rumor, the people obeyed.

The Matabele, the Vanishing People, blood kin of the mighty Zulu, came "out". They ebbed and flowed across the veld like a black tide of death. With the fury of storm driven waves, they dashed themselves against the wagon *lagers* where white men had prepared to make a stand. The spray which was cast high was the redness of their blood. Here and there, after a temporary check, the waves flattened and rolled on, leaving only charred timbers and bleaching bones to say that here white men had tried to stem the tide of rebellion. Here and there the veld was carpeted with the silent, death stiffened forms of naked men right up to the wheels of the wagons forming the outer bulwark of *lagers*.

Caught unprepared, despite warnings from men who knew, the white authorities were helpless to check the trouble when it would have been comparatively easy to stop—at the beginning. The police force was disorganized, their numbers few and scattered . . .

And then—the signal drums beat out the news exultantly; the telegraph wires whispered it with a feeling that the end was at hand—the rumor arose that the native police, the Black Watch, had mutinied.

THERE was not a line of compromise in the sergeant's figure. He held to the stiff, automaton-like pose which military usage imposes on a noncommissioned officer in the presence of a superior, as rigidly as he held to the purpose which had driven him to seek this interview.

He was a dapper little man. The white helmet which shaded his blue eyes was nicely adjusted to the right angle. His back and belly were hollowed, his shoulders squared, the thumbs of his lightly clenched hands were in line with the seams of his breeches. Under his left armpit he held his swagger cane; the gold knob of it, embossed with the crest of his old regiment, glistened no brighter than his tunic buttons.

He was an ideal representative of a noncom of the old spit-and-polish school —army bred, army reared, army trained. His bible was the Regulations; his hymns, phrases taken from the drill book; and he could make those phrases sound like anthems of victory.

"What you ask," the commanding

officer said—but though he addressed the sergeant, he looked at the portly troop sergeant major, as if seeking that man's support—"what you ask, Sergeant, is impossible. Quite impossible."

At any other time—it is the army tradition to accept without question a superior's decision—the sergeant would have accepted this as his dismissal, saluted and retired. But now he stood firm.

"It is not impossible, sir," he said firmly.

The T.S.M's face flushed scarlet; he looked like an offended turkey cock.

"So you think fit to contradict your superior officer, Sergeant?" the C.O. said coldly.

"I respectfully beg to differ, sir," the sergeant amended. "I beg leave to point out, sir, that a refusal of my request may result in serious trouble."

"Damn it, man!" the C.O. exclaimed wrathfully. "Are you threatening to mutiny with your men?"

"My men have not mutinied, sir, and will not unless—"

"It is that *unless* we are afraid of, Sergeant," the C.O. interrupted. "Give it a name."

"Sir," said the sergeant, "word has spread through the country that the men of the Black Watch have mutinied. The rebels believe it. The witch doctor hasn't stopped boasting about it since the rumor first started. And if you are going to keep the men penned up here, under guard, that, I respectfully submit, sir, gives the color of truth to the rumor. Why, sir, the witch doctor claims that his magic is responsible for it; an' he prophesied it from the beginning. It has, sir, that rumor, stiffened the backbone of the rebels and—if I may say so—put the wind up the white folk. Even you, sir; you're afraid that the rumor may prove to be true."

"And cause enough, surely, Sergeant," the C.O. said. "You won't deny, I suppose, that the men were completely beyond your control last night? Why, man, it's a wonder they didn't murder us all in our beds while we slept."

The sergeant smiled.

"There was never that danger, sir," he said earnestly. "I'll admit that they may have seemed to be a little out of hand."

"Good Lord!" the C.O. shouted. "A little out of hand, you say? They were running about and yelling—never heard such a din—like a lot of lunatics. They were fighting mad, Sergeant."

"Yes, sir, they was," the Sergeant agreed in complacent tones. "That's just it. They was warriors, sir, before I made soldiers of them. And last night—all them that wasn't on duty, that is—they celebrated in their own way just what they was going to do to the rebels. This mutiny rumor—it *was* all I could do when they first heard of that!—made them a bit hotter than they'd have been otherwise. Their pride was hurt, sir. They was like a lot of school kids who'd been kept in unfairly on a fine day. So they was a bit noisy and they did things which ain't in accordance with the Queen's Regulations, sir."

The sergeant smiled grimly as he thought of some of the things the men had done by way of preparing for the war testing which they believed to be at hand. They had made the sergeant the center of their ritualistic ceremonies. In his presence they had performed rites which, shorn of their proper setting and enacted in the eyes of one who was ignorant of the symbolism, could only be labeled as grossly obscene.

"Still, sir," the sergeant resumed, "last night's *indaba*—why, as I look at it, that was no more than a—a sort of ball before the battle, sir."

"And they were making you the belle of the ball, Sergeant," the C.O. commented dryly. "Is that it?"

The sergeant grinned sheepishly, confused for the moment by a memory of the part he had played in last night's ceremonies: he had worn a headdress of ostrich plumes and a magnificent leopard skin had covered his almost naked body.

He had danced a few grotesque steps. But he had not, for one moment, surrendered the dignity of his color and rank. He had played the part of the captain of an *impi,* but he had not once forgotten, or allowed the men to forget, that he was the sergeant in charge of the Black Watch.

He said:

"It was all harmless fun, sir. No," he corrected himself, "it was something more than fun. I've seen a regiment of men attend a field communion service, sir, before an attack. And that's what my men, the Black Watch, was doing last night—if I can put it that way, sir."

The C.O. nodded thoughtfully. He was a just man, even if he was a little hasty in coming to a decision. He was always ready to revise his judgments, if it could be shown that his rulings were wrong.

"And you assure me there was no mutiny, no thought of mutiny?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you request that you be allowed to take the men of the British South Africa Native Police—" the C.O. gave the Black Watch their full, official designation—"out on active service?"

"Yes, sir," the sergeant said hopefully.

The C.O. whistled thoughtfully.

"I can quite see," he said presently, "that there is a lot to be said in favor of your suggestion. But—" his frown of doubt damped the sergeant's spirits—"there is also a lot to be said against it. It is a difficult question, Sergeant. Too difficult for me to decide by myself. The answer to it may well influence the future of this country. It may mean a quick end to the rebellion, or—" he shrugged his shoulders. "However, I won't go into the pros and cons of the matter now.

"Tonight, Sergeant, members of the administrative council are meeting with me here. I will put your request before them. That's all!"

"Right about turn!" the T.S.M. ordered curtly. "Quick march!"

Automatically the sergeant responded to the iron discipline which, for thirty years—he was now only forty-five—had ruled his life. And once outside of the C.O's office hut that discipline held him rigid and silent while the hot tempered T.S.M. told him in blunt and brutal language just what he thought of a sergeant who dared to argue with a superior.

That ordeal over, he hastened to his quarters.

HIS pace slackened as he approached the rows of neatly thatched huts which housed the native police. They bordered on three sides their parade ground. On the fourth side, at the upper end, were his own quarters.

He scowled angrily at the sight of a man, dressed in an ill fitting, nondescript uniform, who stood on guard at the entrance to the square.

"Who goes there?" this man challenged, assuming a military pose.

"Friend!" the sergeant snapped.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign!"

The sergeant swore under his breath, but obeyed.

The guard relaxed then, grinning good naturedly, and offered the sergeant an expensive cigar. He took no offense at the sergeant's curt refusal.

"The niggers are quiet enough, Sarge," he said. "Haven't heard a peep out of them. Wish they would try something. That might liven matters up." He patted his rifle. "They need the sort of lesson this chap can teach 'em. Why—"

He stared wonderingly at the straight line of the sergeant's back.

"Hell!" he exclaimed. "Wonder what I've done wrong now? The way he looked at me an' walked on, anybody'd think I was a block of wood."

And much more in this line the volunteer member of the town defense guard thought as he lighted the cigar the sergeant had rejected.

Meanwhile the sergeant had seated himself in a deck chair which his native servant had placed in the shade just outside his hut door.

He sighed uneasily as two natives came running toward him across the parade ground.

They were big men, naked save for a *moocha* about their loins; but when they came to a halt a few paces from the sergeant, their pose, as they stood rigidly at attention, seemed to clothe them with a uniform.

One, the taller and slighter, was a Matabele. The other, a member of one of the Ba-Ila tribes. They were splendidly muscled warriors; fighting was, with them, instinctive.

But they were more than warriors, they were soldiers. They typified the men of the Black Watch.

When they had first come to the sergeant's hands they had been the rawest of raw material; he had welded and tempered them. The orderly routine of military life had squared their shoulders and sloughed the fat from their bellies. It had disciplined their minds as well as their bodies. It had replaced tribal taboos and fetishes with one which embodied all. It had given them a flag and that indefinable something which is loosely labeled *ésprit de corps.*

Not that routine alone could have done all this, or any of it. To the sergeant belongs the full credit. It had not been an easy task. There had been times when he despaired of ever attaining, or even of remotely approaching, that standard of perfection which was his goal. He had had so many things to contend with. From the very first day, ignorant of the country and language, when he had been introduced to the men and left to make his own way with them, he had been faced with overwhelming obstacles. But he had won through—and that with little support from his superiors, who had looked upon the forming of a native regiment as an amusing, but worthless, experiment.

He had succeeded. He had forged a weapon that was as true to the hand of authority as a Toledo blade in the hand of a fencer.

But authority refused to use the weapon he had forged. Authority professed to see flaws and rust where none existed!

Therefore the sergeant sighed as he looked at his two corporals.

"Well?" he questioned, though he knew why they had come to him.

Kawiti, the Matabele—he was the senior corporal—said—

"Are we to be slipped from the leash, *inkosi?*"

The sergeant shook his head.

"Not yet. The matter is under consideration."

"*Au-a!*" exclaimed the Matabele.

. "*Wo-we!*" burst from the pouting lips of Mukadi, the Ba-Ila.

The sergeant removed his helmet and put it carefully on the ground beside him.

"Sit!" he said.

He held his swagger cane across his knees. With the palm of his right hand he absently polished the gold knob.

The natives squatted on their haunches before him. He leaned forward, toward them.

"At least," he said abruptly, "I gave the lie to the rumor. Our honor is safe."

"It was never unsafe," Mukadi replied. "We are men. Lies can not move us."

"Yet we are put to shame," Kawiti observed. "They have taken our uniforms from us. They have locked away our rifles and bayonets. White men stand guard to see that we do not move from this place. Is that well done, *inkosi?*"

"It is an order," the sergeant said lightly.

"Orders," Mukadi grumbled. "We know how to obey orders. Have you not taught us? But it is hard for men to sit in idleness when there is work to be done. *Wo-we!* And what work! It is, I say, foolish to keep hungry dogs on a leash when quarry to be hunted is

sighted. There is a danger, *inkosi,* that they will slip the leash, or break it. There is a danger that they will turn on those who hold them."

"Is there that danger?" the sergeant asked sharply.

"No, *inkosi,*" Mukadi replied quickly, confidently.

And Kawiti growled:

"He only gives you words to use in speech with those whose folly keeps us here in idleness. You know us, *inkosi.* We will not throw dirt on our uniforms."

"You have no uniforms," the sergeant commented.

"Say you so, *inkosi?* But I say that the uniform still clothes us. *Au-a!* And I say that to you, you who taught us."

"I told the colonel-*inkosi,*" the sergeant said slowly, after acknowledging Kawiti's point with a gesture of his hand, "all the things that Mukadi has just said to me. Truly. In my folly, seeking only to move him our way, I threw dirt on your uniforms. I said that leashed dogs sometimes turn on those who hold them."

"And you could not move him?"

"I could not move him."

"What then is in his mind?" asked Kawiti. "Why are we not loosed against those fools who rebel?"

"Those who rebel," the sergeant answered meaningly, "are men of your race. And blood is thicker than the water of allegiance; the ties of kinship, it may be, are stronger than the bonds of discipline."

Kawiti's voice was reproachful as he asked—

"Do *you* say that?"

"Nay. I only give you the colonel-*inkosi's* words."

Mukadi chuckled.

"I could answer them, but will not."

"I can and will," Kawiti said earnestly. "The matter touches my kinship nearer than yours, Mukadi."

"That was in my mind," the Ba-Ila acknowledged.

"Listen, *inkosi,*" Kawiti said. "If my father runs a thorn into his toe, shall I not pull it out? Even though the pulling hurts him? If it is not pulled out, it may cause him to stumble and fall into the mire of swamps. It may fester and carry poison to his heart. And that is all this folly of rebellion is—a thorn in my father's foot. *Au-a!* Even while we sit here talking, the poison is spreading. The thorn must be pulled out.

"It may be that we will have to cut off my father's toe, or his foot, or his leg below the knee—or above it—but better that than he fall into the mire and be choked to death by the filth of slime that is there.

"*Au-a!* I say that it is a son's right to pull a thorn from his father's foot; an elder brother's duty to correct the younger; a father's duty to chastise a foolish son. And we, we men of the Black Watch, we are the sons, the brothers, and the fathers—I have spoken. And we must sit here doing nothing?"

"Until the order comes," the sergeant agreed, "our hands and feet are tied."

"What if the order never comes?" Mukadi asked.

The sergeant answered promptly—

"We must still wait, proving ourselves."

"*Au-a!* That is not how you would have it, *inkosi,*" Kawiti said fiercely. "We know you. We know your worth. Listen, death will catch us no matter how fast we run. But that is no reason why we should sit and wait for it. So say the word, *inkosi,* and we will go with you from this place. In the darkness of the night we will go. And you shall lead us against those who rebel. What say you, *inkosi?*"

The sergeant shook his head and said firmly:

"No. We stay here until the order comes. Give that word to the men."

He reached down for his helmet and adjusted it carefully on his head. As he did so the two corporals sprang to their feet, saluted and marched swiftly to their quarters.

LATE that night the order came. The sergeant had been sent for and he now stood in the C.O.'s office, his eyes dazzled by the white glare of the lamp, a little confused by the knowledge that he was improperly dressed; the summons had been unexpected and he had obeyed eagerly. He furtively hooked his tunic collar.

The office, he saw—and it added to his confusion—was full of men; civilians mostly, members of the administrative council; their names were open sesames to the financial and political circles of South Africa. They were men who counted not the cost if the end justified it; who subordinated everything to the execution of their purpose.

The sergeant waited, wondering why they ignored his presence. He told himself that they were concerned with things of greater importance than the fate of a sergeant and the natives under him.

He said:

"You sent for me, sir. I was told to come at the double. I am here!"

His voice was harsh; it cut like a knife through the dull drone of debate.

The C.O. looked at him angrily.

"You forget yourself, Sergeant. You—"

A big man, dressed in an ill fitting gray suit, laughed titteringly. He had the eyes of a dreamer; the profile of an emperor of ancient Rome.

"The man's right, Colonel," he said. "Tell him—and let him go."

The sergeant checked the impulse to laugh at the expression on the faces of the other men. They looked as if they were listening to the dictates of a god.

"Very good, sir," said the C.O. And to the sergeant:

"Within the hour, Sergeant, the troopers who were posted at M'zingwane have come into camp, accompanied by a number of settlers. They made a forced ride through the darkness. They report that the rebels are massing on the other side of the river in strong force. We have decided that the men of the Black Watch shall be allowed to prove their loyalty by holding the M'zingwane post. You will parade them at once, march them over to the stores for kit issue." He looked at his watch. "Within the hour I want you to be on your way. You will avoid marching your men through the town. You will go quietly, secretly. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir." The sergeant's blue eyes danced with happiness.

"Don't thank me," the C.O. said sourly.

"No, sir. And am I in full command?"

"Absolutely!"

"Very good, sir. Thank you, sir."

The sergeant saluted, eager to take the news to his men.

"Sergeant, wait a minute!" The whining, falsetto voice of the man in gray stopped him at the door.

"Sir?"

"Perhaps, on second thought, it would be best for the Black Watch to remain here—under guard. If you think that way, there's a commission waiting for you with the mounted force."

"I am under orders to be on trek within the hour, sir," the sergeant said steadily.

He was dismissed then with a casual wave of the hand and the hum of debate recommenced as the door closed behind him.

THE sergeant's departure from the police camp at the head of his men was not at all as he, and they, had dreamed of.

He had wanted to go out with the colorful pageantry of war—flags flying, bayonets gleaming in the sunlight, bugles playing. He had visualized the guard turning out to present arms; of marching his men through streets lined with cheering civilians . . .

Instead, everything had been done by

stealth. The equipment had been doled out to the men by the light of a smoke blackened candle lamp. The only voice to break the silence was the sergeant's, calling the roll, and that of the regimental storekeeper shouting sourly:

"Next! Hurry up! Silence in the ranks!"

In silence they had left the camp, like men under the cloud of disgrace, and had made their way by a devious route over the veld to the wagon road which linked the township with the post at M'zingwane. No one saluted them. No one saw them go. Their bugles were muted. The darkness swallowed them up.

By sunup they were fifteen miles on the road to M'zingwane.

Natives posted on the heights of *kopjes* saw the flash of their bayonets and the dust cloud churned up by the proud swing of their naked feet. Signal drums broadcast what their eyes saw, clamoring for an explanation, beating out imperious warnings.

And rebel warriors at M'zingwane, who had waited through the night for the morning signal to rush the camp, retreated sullenly across the river and lost themselves among the thick brush and boulders which fringed the bank.

The trek of the sergeant and his fifty men to the post was as uneventful as any peacetime practise march. The veld seemed to be deserted: it sweltered under the heat of a swiftly mounting sun. But the sergeant refused to be lulled into the carelessness of security. He had scouts ahead and on the flanks. He maneuvered his men as if they were passing through a country swarming with hostile troops. And they were!

Three hours of noon, they sighted the company flag and cheered lustily. There was nothing sentimental about this; they only cheered the flag because it showed them how near they were to their goal. At noon, after taking proper precautions to insure they would not be ambushed by lurking warriors, they marched into the deserted post.

The men had made a record breaking march—not that any of them were interested in that—they were hungry, they were tired. But they stood stoically at attention while the sergeant made a quick inspection of the camp and the immediate vicinity. What he saw pleased him. The camp would be made easy to defend. But, of even greater importance for the moment, the place had not been looted. The large store hut was full of grain and provisions brought in by settlers and traders. This discovery answered the real problem which had worried him. He would have no difficulty in feeding his men.

He returned to them and eyed them calculatingly. Their faces were a little drawn, their belts pulled tight. They were hungry, thirsty and tired. But there was work to be done.

He rained his orders on them. They obeyed with an enthusiasm which made a mock of their fatigue.

Rifles were stacked, uniforms discarded: soldiers became laborers . . .

It still wanted an hour to sunset when the sergeant called a halt, satisfied with their achievements.

The camp had been open to attack on all sides. It was now surrounded by a barricade of sharp, fire hardened stakes and thorn bush. Behind that, yet another barricade had been built of boulders, sacks filled with earth and crates of tinned food from the store.

He marched them down to the river—it was little more than a stone's throw from the camp—and they washed the dirt and fatigue of their labors from them.

Returning, they donned their uniforms and stood to attention while the two buglers sounded retreat as Corporal Mukadi slowly hauled down the flag.

All this, and more, was watched by warriors from their cover on the other side of the river, who dispatched fast runners to report to a wizened old man who lived in a cave halfway up the steep slopes of a *kopje*—to the imaginative that *kopje* looked like the form of a

crouching lion—a mile distant. That old one believed himself to be the servant of the Great Spirit.

MOISTURE dripping clouds dropped low over the veld, mopping out the stars. A bitterly cold wind blew from the east. The cackling of hyenas cheered the kill of a lion. In the river sounded the hoarse bellowing of crocodiles. Signal drums boomed continually.

The night voices of Africa were rampant. Yet they alone would not have kept the sergeant's men awake. Nor would the cold. There were blankets aplenty and a blazing fire to warm chilled blood.

And the men were tired. The desire for sleep weighted their eyelids and shackled their legs; the sergeant most of all, for he was a weak man, physically, compared to the smallest of his command.

But not once did the eyes of the sentries close; not once did they fail to give warning when danger threatened; not once did the sleepers fail to rise swiftly and hasten to their allotted posts in response to the sentries' shouts of, "Stand to!"

And those shouts came frequently.

Again and again the night was made hideous by the wild, boastful shouts of warriors and the beating of a thousand spear heads on a thousand oxhide shields. Again and again the earth trembled to the thud of naked feet charging through the darkness.

And then, suddenly, all would be silent. Only the keenest of ears could detect the stealthy whisperings and rustling of grass which told that the warriors were retiring again.

Not once did the attackers launch a weapon at the defenders. Not a shot answered the shouted threats of the warriors. A positive proof, that, of the steady nerves of the Black Watch; proof, too, of the strength of the discipline which held them. They would not fire—it was an order!—until the sergeant gave the word. And the sergeant was too wise a warrior to be gulled into wasting ammunition by blazing it away at shadows in the night's darkness.

Except for the first shouted warnings of the sentries, all the martial din of the attackers was answered by silence.

Just after the false dawn had for a fleeting moment silvered the clouds, the warriors charged again. This time they did not halt until one or two crashed into the thorn stockade.

Some of the Black Watch laughed grimly at the yells of angry pain which came from the thorn torn men.

"Steady! Stand firm!"

The sergeant's command was superfluous, but the sound of his voice was companionable; it cheered the men.

The shouts of the warriors ringed the camp. They appealed to the Black Watch to join them. They spoke of the victory that was to be won over the white men. They spoke of looting, of women to be had for the taking. They promised big rewards. They jeered, threatened and implored. By cunningly related facts of a history past, they endeavored to sow discord within the ranks of the Black Watch. They tried to set Matabele against Ba-Ila—and six months earlier *that* ruse might have been successful.

They addressed individual men by name. They appealed to the bonds of color and of kinship. And the Black Watch answered it all by a contemptuous silence. Until a glow lighted the eastern horizon the barrage of voices continued. It ceased then, suddenly.

Twittering notes of birds, slowly awakening, took the place of shouted curses; the earth vibrated to the roaring of hunger sated lions; the steady murmur of the rippling river was checked for a little while at the ford shallows as if it were surging against obstacles which had not previously been there.

Gradually the glow in the east increased. Streamers of light, radiating from one central point, sprayed the leaden clouds with color and painted the

kopjes' jagged peaks with gold.

The clouds rose higher, broke and drifted apart. Rainbow colors poured into them, changing constantly. Soon the whole sky was ablaze with color. The first delicate pastel shades of green, purple, rose and lavender, subtly changed to harder, harsher tones. And then, suddenly, there was no more color —only the inexpressible emptiness of a cloudless sky in which shone a molten sun.

For a few minutes a dense white ground mist covered the veld, looking like a tideless sea of foam. Then it vanished and the men who had kept such anxious watch through the night saw nothing but the bare, empty veld. North, south, east and west—to the *kopjes* which ringed and limited the horizon—their eyes saw nothing that lived, nothing that moved, save the retreating shadows before the sun's swift rising.

Save that they were not overimaginative men, save that the grass all about the camp was trodden flat, they might well have believed that the events of the night were but the distortions of a nightmare.

They looked across the river, there was not a sound or sign of the warriors. But they were not to be deceived. Quicksands look firm until a man tries his weight on them.

The bugles sounded the fall in. The men obeyed the brazen summons and presented arms as Corporal Kawiti hoisted the flag to the top of the whitewashed pole.

The men looked eagerly at the sergeant. He knew what was in their minds. They wanted his explanation of the night's *indabas*. And they were men of action, anxious to prove themselves; they wanted to be led against the rebels they knew were lurking under cover on the opposite side of the river.

He said:

"They tested your courage and also their own. That is all. They tried to defeat you by words. You defeated them by your silence. They outnumber us. They are, I judge, twenty to our one. To go out seeking them would be folly. So we wait here. If they bring us a bone we will chew it. Now, listen; pay attention to orders."

He gave his orders for the day's routine; fatigue parties were told off and instructed in their duties; sentries were posted. And to each man was given the opportunity, provided no attack was launched, of at least six hours' sleep before darkness once again descended.

He was about to dismiss the men to the food which they hungered for when he remembered that he had not yet examined the arms which had been issued to them.

"After you have had skoff," he said, "there will be a kit inspection. Parade—dismiss!"

He smiled contentedly as the men hurried away to the cook-fires. Many of them, he noticed, were already beginning to clean their equipment. He called Kawiti and Mukadi to him.

"Tell the men," he said, "that the inspection parade is only so that I may see that their guns are in order and take a count of the ammunition. My eyes will see no dirt or need of polish."

"Truly, *inkosi*," Kawiti answered gravely, "there will be no dirt; no need of polish!"

The sergeant let it go at that and went into one of the huts where his batman had set an appetizing meal for him. He forgot for awhile that he was very tired; forgot the doubts that weighed heavily upon him.

IT WAS an hour later. Once again the sergeant was alone in the hut. The door was closed, he had given orders that he was not to be disturbed unless an emergency arose. Safe, then, from interruption, he felt that it was safe to indulge in the furious anger which possessed him. He paced restlessly up and down; his face was red, his eyes smoldered. He shook his clenched fists and cursed—cursed until the vehemence of

his rage left him breathless and very weak.

He slumped helplessly into a chair and, resting his arms on the table, pillowed his head on them. His shoulders heaved convulsively; he made dry, racking, choking sounds.

"The dirty swine!" he muttered. "The lousy rotten swine."

Presently he sat erect and stared with suspiciously bright eyes at the heap of rifle cartridges on the table.

"What am I to do?" The echo of his voice was the barren reply.

He picked up two or three of the cartridges and then tossed them back on the pile with a gesture of helpless anger. It was the ammunition which had been issued to his men; ammunition for the long barreled Martinis which were the official arms of the Black Watch. They were vicious looking messengers of death. The large caliber bullets looked big enough to stop a charging elephant.

Quite by chance, during his inspection of the men's equipment, he had taken several cartridges out of the bandoleer of one of the men. He noticed then that the bullets were very loose in the cases, so loose that much of the propelling force of the gas made by the explosion of the powder would escape. Acting on a sudden, fear born impulse, the sergeant had ordered every round of ammunition to be turned in to him. And, in the seclusion of his hut, he had examined every single round.

He had discovered then that the cartridges were useless; so useless that there was no point in carrying out his intention of clamping the cases more tightly about the bullets. He had discovered that some held no charge at all; the rest scarcely enough powder to have sent the bullet a hundred paces.

He saw now the explanation of the things which had puzzled him—why, for example, his request had been granted and the secrecy which had surrounded the departure of the Black Watch from the headquarters camp. His doubts now were confirmed.

This issue of worthless ammunition was a deliberate plan to nullify the feared desertion of the Black Watch. And the authorities had—it was evident now—feared that. So they had drawn their fangs and sent them on this venture. It was a fiendishly clever move. The township had been relieved of the task of guarding trained men who might mutiny. At the same time, should the men prove loyal, they had been sent to a place where their presence, so near to the cave of the witch doctor, could not help but react upon the morale of the rebels.

Again, if they did mutiny, it would not matter very much. Fifty men added to the rebel ranks—that's all!

"But they've been too clever," the sergeant muttered. "Suppose we'd been attacked and we'd opened fire! The rebels would have believed then that their charms had made them safe from the bullets. There'd have been no holding them then. My Lord, what a mess! What in hell am I to do?"

He cursed himself for not having examined the ammunition as it was distributed. Yet he knew that he was not to blame there. And if he had made this discovery earlier, what could he have done? Marched his men back to headquarters and said that he had changed his mind. Or he might have insisted on an issue of properly loaded cartridges. And then what would have happened?

But that line of thought got him nowhere. Waste of time considering what he might have done. He had to face the situation. He considered marching the men back to headquarters. But that was impossible. It was not likely that the warriors would let them go without a fight. And how could fifty men hope to beat off an attack of a thousand?

He came to a final decision. The men must not know that they had been betrayed. And the rebels must not be encouraged by the belief that their charms rendered harmless the white

man's guns—the guns must not be used. Not a shot must be fired. And now he thought things over, the situation was not as bad as it had first seemed. After all, even if his men had been properly armed, there was small chance of their being able to beat off a determined attack of the rebels opposed to them. The inevitable end would be delayed a little, that was all. And now the possession of rifles and ammunition, even if they were forbidden to use them, stiffened his men's morale. As for the rebels, they would wonder why the guns were silent; they would, perhaps, suspect a trap. Or they might, even, arrive at the conclusion that the men of the Black Watch—although they would not yet come out openly on the side of the rebels—were secretly in sympathy with them.

"Enter!" the sergeant shouted, answering a knock at the door.

His two corporals entered. Mukadi carefully closed the door behind him. Kawiti's hands, the sergeant noted with a quickening surge of fear, were lightly lashed together with a piece of rope.

He cleared his throat with a rasping cough.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked of Kawiti.

"I was afraid, *inkosi,*" the man replied tonelessly.

The sergeant stared at him incredulously.

"Afraid? Of what?"

"Of myself, *inkosi.*"

"Is he mad, Mukadi? What is the full tale?"

"It is not my tale to tell, *inkosi,*" Mukadi answered.

"No, it is mine," Kawiti said fiercely. "Listen. Among those voices which shouted to us during last night's *indabas* was one voice I knew. It was my father's voice. He called to me. He demanded that I spit upon the oath I have taken and join with him against the white men. You heard, *inkosi?*"

"I heard," the sergeant answered calmly. "What of it? You answered your father's demands with silence. You remained true to your oath of allegiance."

"Aye," Kawiti said heavily. "I remained true. But my father's voice still rings loudly in my ears. And I am afraid."

"Of what?"

"That that voice will deafen me to the voice of wisdom and allegiance. I am afraid that my legs will carry me over the river. I am afraid that my hands will be raised against you. So, I bound my hands—"

The sergeant's laugh interrupted the man. He said—

"A child so bound could easily free himself, Kawiti."

"My hands are bound, *inkosi,*" Kawiti said gravely. "Because of my fear, I bound them. And I took council with Mukadi. It was a grave matter we had to consider. It was in my mind that death was my proper punishment. But Mukadi would not have it so. We came then to this decision. I must be a prisoner, *inkosi.* A guard must be set over me."

THE sergeant licked his dry lips. The food he had lately eaten felt like a leaden ball in his belly.

"And what," he said, "shall I do without my senior corporal? What shall I say to the men when they know you have turned traitor?"

"You must appoint another in my place. And I have not turned traitor yet, *inkosi.* It is only that I am afraid."

"What then shall I tell the men when they ask what the fault is?"

"That my rifle was dirty and—"

"Who would believe that?" the sergeant scoffed.

"*Au-a!*" Kawiti growled with an angry shake of the head. "Tell them what you please. But make a swift end of this. I tell you that the wind of words threatens to blow away the rope which binds my hands."

The sergeant looked at him thoughtfully, then rose to his feet, went to the

door, opened it and summoned two men who were on guard near by. They made no attempt to disguise their astonishment at the orders he gave them. But there was no hesitation in their obedience to his commands. They followed him into the hut and ranged themselves on either side of the tall corporal.

The desperate look of a hunted animal came into Kawiti's eyes. For a moment the sergeant thought he meant to resist arrest.

"Prisoner and escort!" At the sound of the sergeant's crisp voice Kawiti relaxed with a sigh; he smiled, happily content. "Right about turn! Quick march!"

As the hut door closed on the three men, the sergeant looked questioningly at Mukadi.

"It is all right, *inkosi,*" that man said with a chuckle. "I know that tall one as I know my hand. He is, in some things, being a Matabele, a fool. But he is a *man. Wo-we, inkosi!* And a man is often only a child. Listen. I have a small son—you know it—who often plays a game that he is an evil worker. Now, if we treat him as such should be treated, he is happy for that is part of the game. But if we laugh and refuse to believe his pretenses, then, in truth, he becomes what he had only pretended to be."

The sergeant nodded understandingly. It comforted him to be reassured that his treatment of Kawiti had been the correct one. And yet, for a moment, he had been tempted to argue with the man and laugh at his fears.

The sergeant indicated the pile of cartridges on the table.

"They must be returned to the men," he said. "And the order is no shots are to be fired, no matter how great the provocation. We will fight, if there is fighting to be done, with bayonets. It comes to me that that is the better way."

"Undoubtedly the better way, *inkosi,*" Mukadi said with a grin. "And, pardon, *inkosi,* but having mind to the order, would it not be best to withhold the cartridges from the men. In the heat of a fight they might forget an order."

The sergeant shook his head.

"They know how to obey an order, Mukadi. They will not forget. It is their right that they should be armed with the white men's arms. I will not take that honor from them. So, see to it that the cartridges are returned to the men. To each man his allotted number."

"And Kawiti's, *inkosi?*"

"Are Kawiti's," the sergeant answered promptly. "When he comes for them, he will find them here."

Mukadi saluted.

"I go now, *inkosi,*" he said, "for men to help me return the cartridges."

The sergeant nodded absently as Mukadi retired. He thought of Kawiti and wondered what he would do if more men came to him demanding that he place them under guard. Or suppose the voices they heard proved louder than the bond of allegiance? In that case, he told himself grimly, the end would come very quickly and the authorities would be justified. But at that thought anger again inflamed him. Nothing could justify the callous manner in which the Black Watch had been betrayed.

He wondered why Mukadi was such a long time returning. He undid the collar of his tunic and mopped his sweating forehead. The weights of fatigue pulled down his eyelids. And when Mukadi, accompanied by two others, presently entered the hut, they found the sergeant fast asleep, his head pillowed on his arms.

They tiptoed noiselessly about the hut, making a bed for him. With gentle hands they undressed him, lifted him carefully and laid him down on the bed they had prepared for him. He did not move. Sleep held him fast.

They then put the cartridges into the canvas bags they had brought with them —all but the fifty which belonged to Corporal Kawiti.

"And he said," one of the privates

whispered, "that these are to be given back to us?"

Mukadi nodded.

"What folly!" the other private exclaimed. "Better that we throw them into the river."

"Perhaps," said the first, "he does not know they are worthless."

"He knows," Mukadi said roughly. "But he does not know that we know. And that he is not to know. It would put him to shame. *Wo-we!* He is our father, and it is not the part of children to put their parents to shame."

"Why, think you, Mukadi, have we been so treated?"

"Who knows? And what matter? Perhaps it is a testing. Perhaps it is but a white man's folly. It does not matter."

"Look!" One of the privates pointed to the sergeant's bandoleer. It hung from a nail in the wall. It held fifty rounds of ammunition. The bullets shone like silver. "There," the private continued, "is a bullet for each man of us. We—"

"Fool," interrupted Mukadi, "they will not fit our guns. Now let us go from this place before our babbling awakens him."

They tiptoed out of the room as men might from the presence of a sleeping god.

The yellow glare of African sunlight warmed them. The ground was carpeted with sleeping men, their bayoneted rifles beside them. Sentries walked their posts with dragging footsteps, but their lookout was keen. A man stood alertly on guard at the door of the storehouse in which the corporal was imprisoned.

Here and there a sleeping man snored lustily. The drone of insects dropped to a low, somnolent note, sounding like the sleepy breathing of the earth. The *kopjes* danced grotesquely in the heat haze. On the veld nothing stirred. The sun was overhead and the shadows had retreated within the substance of their origin.

WILD shouts, scoffing laughter, a yell of pain, the sound of blows and angry curses awakened the sergeant with a start from the oblivion of sleep. He jumped to his feet and ran to the door of the hut, intent on determining the cause of the riotous din.

At the door he halted, conscious that he was naked. He wondered vaguely that this should be so. He dressed hurriedly, but completely. He was too much of a disciplinarian to appear before his men improperly—in the military sense—dressed.

He peered anxiously through a crack in the door as he laced on his shoes and wound his puttees with a mathematical precision. But his range of vision was limited. He could only see the backs of a few men. They swayed to and fro, apparently moved by some great emotion.

The yells, the shouts, the sound of blows, continued.

He put on his helmet, slung his revolver holster over his shoulder and stepped out into the slanting rays of the afternoon sun, prepared for any eventuality, except the thing that faced him. Perhaps that was because the heaviness of sleep was still with him; or because the sun dazzled him.

He blinked and stared in astonishment at the spectacle which greeted him. He saw Kawiti seated astride the prostrate form of a private, beating that man's naked posterior with the palms of his hands. The yells of pain were coming from this victim of Kawiti's wrath; the shouts and jeering laughter from the men of the Black Watch who were watching the beating.

The sergeant half drew his revolver, then thrust it back again. He did not understand what it was all about and he knew the folly of precipitate action. Africa teaches caution.

He saw Mukadi standing among the onlookers. He heard his corporal urge Kawiti to strike harder. He took a hesitating step forward, then another.

Some of the Black Watch then saw him. They whispered to others. They looked at him uneasily. There was mirth in their eyes. He wondered at that. He took yet another step toward them and then, like skylarking schoolboys at the approach of a master, they ran away from the place and occupied themselves with suddenly discovered tasks.

Only Kawiti and his yelling victim remained, oblivious of the sergeant's presence. That man waited patiently, sure that an explanation would soon be given him. It came almost immediately.

"Let that," Kawiti shouted, a blow spacing each word, "be a lesson to you, worthless one. Let this, and this, and this, teach you to keep your eyes open when you are on guard! Now go."

He rose to his feet, somewhat reluctantly, and the man he had beaten, grinning sheepishly now, scuttled swiftly away.

"*Au-a!*" Kawiti exclaimed. "So you saw, *inkosi?* Did that one's yells awaken you? If so, I will beat him again."

"Is that all you have to say, Corporal Kawiti?" the sergeant asked sternly.

"*Au-a, inkosi!* And you still call me corporal. Then you have not put another in my place?"

The sergeant shook his head.

"And will not. Unless—unless you keep me waiting too long for an explanation of this folly."

Kawiti laughed.

"I only taught that worthless one, that sleepy, misbegotten dreamer of dreams to keep his eyes open when he stands guard. *Au-a!* I might have killed you, *inkosi.* Truly. The voice of my father sounded very loud when I was shut up. For long hours I fought against it. But, at last, I could hear only it. It called me to cross the river. But first, it said, I must kill you. And I decided to obey that voice. I unbound my hands, *inkosi.* I tried the door; it was unlocked; it opened to my touch. The folly of it! None challenged me; none offered a hindrance. At the barricade men kept watch, but their watch was outward. Snores of others lauded the spirit of sleep. One was in reach of my hand as I stood in the open doorway. I reached out and took to myself his gun. With the bayonet on it I meant to kill you and then, if any stood in my path, fight my way to join those across the river.

"And then—*Au-a, inkosi!* That beating was well deserved. I saw the man who was appointed to guard me. He was leaning against the wall of the store hut. His eyes were closed. He was fast asleep."

Kawiti paused. There was a puzzled look in his eyes, but he laughed happily.

"Instead, *inkosi,*" he continued, "of running to redden my bayonet with your blood, instead of rejoicing because the way was made easy to obey my father's voice, I knew only a great anger against the man who had failed to keep watch. His awakening was very sudden, *inkosi,* and painful. You saw how I dealt with him, *inkosi,* though that was only the end of it. His yells awakened the sleepers. They crowded about us. Some would have stayed my hand, but Mukadi, who is a very wise one, would not let them.

"'Let be,' he said. 'The beating is deserved. Also, Kawiti is drowning the voice of folly.' Truly, Mukadi is a wise one. He knew. That is all, *inkosi.* There should be no pity for the beaten one. Because he slept, I might have killed you."

"Because he slept," the sergeant amended, "you did not kill me. And the voice of your father?"

Kawiti chuckled.

"That is a folly past, *inkosi.*"

The sun was setting. The men stood to retreat. And as the bugles sounded the call, Kawiti stood stiffly to attention beside the sergeant. Hardly had the bugles' notes died away when, as if in defiance, the beat of a drum sounded. It carried clearly over the veld from the rocky *kopje;* it might have been that crouching lion's roar.

The sergeant fetched his field glasses from the hut and focused them on the *kopje's* flanks. Presently he found what he was seeking. He saw, vaguely, a man seated on a jutting spur of rock.

"*Au-a!*" Kawiti exclaimed. "He beats out orders to the warriors. And he, *inkosi,* is the thorn in my people's foot."

IT WAS a week later, and noon. The sergeant was lolling in a hammock which had been slung for him just outside the hut. Men sat about listlessly or talked in hushed whispers, looking furtively toward the sergeant.

Outwardly, save that the barricade had been strengthened, there was no change in the camp at M'zingwane. There was, apparently, no change in the men and certainly no change in the dreary emptiness of the surrounding veld.

But there was a change in the tempers of the men. They were like boxers who, after long and arduous training, were spoiling for action.

The sergeant realized that he would not be able to hold them much longer. Sooner or later he would be compelled to give them the action they wanted, would be compelled to lead them against the rebels. Their nerves were ragged; so were his.

Every night they had experienced the same succession of alarms which had made the night hideous on the day of their arrival. And every sunrise had seen the veld empty.

Despite the men's outward indifference, the insults shouted at them by the rebels had rankled. The only news they had of the rebellion was what they gleaned from the shouted boasts of the warriors. If they were to be believed, the white men had been totally defeated; all the settlements had been burned to the ground; white women were working as slaves for the chiefs; the kin of the Black Watch were being tortured.

Of course, all this disturbed the men of the Black Watch. Questioning doubts arose in their minds. They thought, too, of the way they had been betrayed by the white men in the matter of the useless cartridges. And such thoughts led to bitter, almost mutinous language. The sergeant had overheard some of their remarks—ignorant, of course, of their context—and was greatly worried.

This morning at roll call two men were missing. He had held an inquiry, but had discovered nothing. He was met by a blank wall of ignorance—an assumed ignorance, he was sure of that.

The sergeant was conscious suddenly of an excited clamor of voices. He turned wearily in the hammock. Then he sighed, thinking he witnessed the beginning of the end. The two deserters had returned. Their faces were wreathed with complacent smiles of triumph as they talked to the men who crowded about them.

The sergeant closed his eyes. He could think better now that he had shut out the sight of his men fraternizing with the two deserters. His lips moved as he silently rehearsed the appeal he would make to the men. He did not intend to let them go without a fight.

"*Inkosi!*"

He opened his eyes and looked into the face of Corporal Kawiti.

"Well?" he demanded.

"The men have returned, *inkosi,*" Kawiti replied. "They have much to say."

"They would have," the sergeant said coldly. "And the men listen to them?"

"But of course, *inkosi.*" Kawiti chuckled. "Their words gladden our hearts."

"You," the sergeant said slowly, "will arrest them and put them under guard. Presently, when I have considered things, I will pronounce their punishment."

"Let there be no punishment, *inkosi.*"

"So?" The sergeant's voice was sad. "You plead for them?"

"Truly. If you punish them, you must punish all. We were all party to their going."

The sergeant sprang out of his hammock. His eyes blazed.

"Have done with this aimless talk," he exclaimed. "Where does it lead?"

Kawiti looked at him curiously before replying.

"Come with me, *inkosi,* and I will tell you."

They went into the sergeant's hut.

"Now, Corporal Kawiti, what does this mean?"

"*Au-a!*" Kawiti said softly. "And still you do not understand? The strain of waiting has fogged your mind. Listen. We grew sick of doing nothing; sick of listening to the lies which were shouted in the darkness, yet we did not know they were lies. We pleaded with you, but your order always was that no man should go beyond the camp. So we drew lots. The honor fell to those two—"

"And so I learn that to desert is considered an honor," the sergeant commented coldly.

"Theirs was the honor," Kawiti continued calmly. "In the darkness of the night they joined the rebels—and *were* rebels! Now they have returned—"

Again the sergeant interrupted angrily—

"To persuade others to desert?"

"To tell us the truth of things, *inkosi. Au-a!* I will bring them to you; you shall hear for yourself."

"Wait!" The sergeant was smiling. The fretful frowns were erased from his forehead. He carried himself with his old time jauntiness. "I have been somewhat of a fool, Kawiti."

"We are born of woman, *inkosi.* We can not escape her folly. Now I will bring the men to you."

"No," the sergeant said. "I will come and sit with my men and listen to my men's report.

"But there must be a punishment. Orders were disobeyed."

"What a man," Kawiti exclaimed softly as he followed the sergeant out of the hut. "But he is just. After the punishment—and I think it will be very light—there will be plans to make."

ALL that day there was an atmosphere of rejoicing and confident, happy suspense in the camp at M'zingwane. Save for the sentries, the men were excused from all duties. They played games, they sang songs of war and of the chase. They feasted to their heart's content on the tinned food the sergeant commandeered from the store. And the sergeant, as he passed from one group to another, was the happiest of them all.

The report of the men he had thought deserters was one of the reasons for this change of attitude.

These two men had been forced to tell the full story of their adventures again and again; of how they had mingled with the rebels and had retired with them across the river at the coming of daybreak. And when they had been discovered for what they were, they had pretended to be deserters. And the rebels, suspecting nothing, believing what they wanted to believe, had permitted the two to return to the camp that they might persuade others to mutiny.

From the rank and file of the rebels, the "deserters" had got the true story of the progress of the rebellion.

Several *impis* had been completely wiped out, mowed down by the bullets from the guns of "many voices". Such and such an *induna* had "come in" with all his people. Warriors were throwing away their spears and returning to their kraals. Men had deserted, even, from the force which guarded the ford at M'zingwane. Those who remained were held only by the promises of the witch doctor. If it were not for him, if it were not for the messages and orders he beat out on the signal drum, they would all depart.

As one man told the "deserters":

"*Wo-we!* This folly of rebellion. If it were not for the witch doctor, it would cease. The white men have let it be known that they will be merciful to those who surrender. They will—they have promised—put an end to the evil

which brought us out against them. But how dare we go against the Umlimo, we who are so near to the abode of his mouthpiece. *Au-a!* Be wise. Be warned. If you who have entered the white men's police come out against them, you only delay the end a little!"

"It is time," Kawiti had said gravely, when the two had told their tale, "that the thorn be pulled from my father's foot."

And the sergeant, understanding the deeper significance of the corporal's words, agreed.

That night, therefore, as soon as sunset's afterglow faded from the sky, the sergeant, Kawiti and ten men made their way out of camp. Before the rebels launched their first mock attack, the little party was well on the way to that *kopje* which so closely resembled the form of a crouching lion.

Sunrise, after an all night vigil among the rocks at the *kopje's* base, saw them little more than a stone's throw from the black, yawning mouth of a cave, halfway up the hill, crouching behind cover on a jutting spur of rock.

They heard the confidence inspiring notes of bugles at the camp; they saw the flag—it was no more than a square shadow against the blue of the sky—climb slowly to the top of the pole. They could see, on the opposite side of the river, the warriors who lurked in the long grass.

The sergeant looked at his men.

"The time is short," he said, taking his rifle from Kawiti who had insisted on carrying it as well as his own. "See if you can bring the old lion from his hole."

The sound of gargantuan laughter mocked him. It was almost as if the *kopje* laughed at them.

The privates hid their faces in their hands. Superstition had, for the moment, defeated them. Kawiti, too, was almost unnerved. He stared fixedly toward the cave's mouth. And then, as if the cave spoke, a voice said:

"I can read your hearts, you who sneak through the darkness. What shall be done with the black dogs who turn against the pack? What shall be done with the white dog who leads them?"

Another voice spoke, answering the first—

"Kill them—kill them all, you who lie in wait."

The sergeant sprang to his feet, ready to shout an order to his men. But that order was never given. A knobkerry thudded against the base of his skull and he dropped to the ground.

Roused by an angry shout from Kawiti, the ten privates rose, forgetting their superstitious fears now that material danger threatened.

They grouped themselves about the prostrate sergeant, bayonets bristling outward, and stiffened to meet the attack of the men who had suddenly leaped down from overhanging rocks. There were over fifty of them. They wore fantastic headdresses of ostrich plumes. Their naked bodies were grotesquely painted with white ash. They were men who had been appointed the witch doctor's special bodyguard and were his fanatical disciples.

They were armed with knobkerries only. Kawiti noted that and smiled grimly.

"Squad!" he shouted, giving his orders in queerly accented English. "Load!"

As one the rifle breeches clicked open and were snapped shut again.

"Take aim—at pointblank range!"

Like well oiled machines the men obeyed as steadily as if they were on parade; as confidently as if the cartridges which they had loaded into their Martinis were capable of dealing death.

Kawiti chuckled. His bluff had halted the warriors. There was something grimly determined about that little band of uniformed men. Their long bayonets seemed to reflect the determination which shone in their eyes. Besides, the warriors knew the power of the guns. For a moment they forgot the assurances their master had given them. They only remembered that hundreds of

other men, who had also been given that assurance, were now dead, killed by the bullets the witch doctor said could not harm them.

Kawiti felt something knocking against his feet. Looking down, he saw that the sergeant had returned to a measure of consciousness and was seeking to attract his attention.

Kawiti bent down.

"It is all right, *inkosi,*" he said reassuringly. "I think they are of a mind to listen to what I have to say."

"The men must not fire," the sergeant said weakly. "Is it understood?"

"Truly, *inkosi,* it is understood."

He straightened, intending to parley with the warriors, believing he could persuade them of the wisdom of handing the witch doctor over to him. But before he could speak, that voice within the cave shouted:

"Kill them. Their bullets can not harm you."

Kawiti saw an age wizened man capering about before the mouth of the cave. He spewed curses at the men of the Black Watch; he shouted angry orders to his followers. Only malice and hate could live, it seemed, in his gnarled body.

"On guard!" Kawiti shouted as the warriors, whipped to a frenzy by the witch doctor's words, rushed forward.

For a little while there was bloody slaughter. Those in the van of the attackers almost thrust themselves on the bayonets' points. And the Black Watch killed scientifically. They lunged coolly, and as coolly recovered.

Then the press got too hard for scientific work and the men discarded the drill thrusts and fought as the occasion permitted.

Private Bombva, unable to withdraw his bayonet from a warrior's body, was felled by a shower of blows. Private Thuso—he had gone a pace forward with the force of a lunge, stooping slightly—was dropped by a blow which smashed his skull.

And all the others were weakened by battering, rib bruising blows which had got past their guard.

But they fought on grimly and held doggedly to their formation.

The warriors surged against them, returning with fresh vigor after every repulse. They were confident of victory now. The guns they had feared were silent, certain proof that the Umlimo fought for them. And, although they had lost many men in the first mad rush, they still outnumbered the Black Watch three or four to one. Further, every one of the Black Watch was bruised and tired by his efforts, while many of the warriors were unmarked—many, indeed, had not yet got close enough to strike a blow.

The witch doctor shouted encouragement to his men and urged them to rush in and make a quick end. He capered about like a madman. He foamed at the mouth. Wild prophecies, mingled with abuse and meaningless jargon, poured from his lips.

He darted suddenly into the cave and returned almost immediately, dragging behind him the huge signal drum. He squatted down before it and struck it tentatively with his clenched fist. It boomed out the first note of a signal he intended to send to the men who waited for the signal to attack the camp.

At that moment Kawiti was turned toward the witch doctor by the chance of the fight he was waging against three warriors. The plan which then came to him so elated him that he relaxed his guard for a moment. And in that moment one of the warriors, seeing his opportunity, struck shrewdly with his knobkerry and Kawiti went down, sprawling across the sergeant's body.

For a little while he was very still; it seemed as if, for him, the fight was over.

But a memory of the thing he had to do fought back, for a time, the mists of unconsciousness. He staggered to his feet. In his hands was the sergeant's rifle. Two privates, grinning understanding, shielded him as he made sure the weapon was loaded.

He went down on one knee and took careful aim.

"Watch, you warriors," he shouted. "I pull a thorn from my father's foot."

He pressed the trigger. As he fired a knobkerry beat against his head again and he keeled over sidewise.

At the report of the rifle the warriors drew back and looked toward their leader. They hoped to see some wonder working that would justify their faith in him.

They saw him jump to his feet as if jerked erect by invisible strings. They saw him clutch at the air with wildly clawing fingers. They saw him press one hand to his side where a stream of blood blurred the fantastic designs painted on his naked skin. And then they saw him collapse in a heap on top of the drum.

Confronted by this conclusive evidence of the worthlessness of the witch doctor's charms, the warriors turned and fled in terror from the place.

TWO hours later a sober little procession made its way across the veld to the camp. There was not a man of them who was not badly cut and bruised, whose uniform was not torn and blood stained. The sergeant and Kawiti had recovered from their hurts sufficiently to be able to walk unaided. The bodies of two privates who had fallen were carried on improvised litters, four men to each litter, and the burden was almost too much for them.

Yet, despite it all, they carried themselves like soldiers. They had done the thing they had set out to do. That was their reward, that and the joy of relating their adventures to those who had been forced to remain to guard the camp.

But the heat was great, their burdens heavy. The pain of their hurts drugged them. Their pace slackened. They reeled like drunken men.

The shrill notes of bugles roused them to a peril. They looked about dazedly and saw men rushing to attack them. Two score young warriors, ignoring the orders of their captains that none was to cross the river in the daytime, had thought to gain credit by wiping out this little band.

It was a moment of severe testing for the sergeant's men. They might have dropped their burdens and reached the security of the stockade before the foremost warrior was within a spear's throw. And that the sergeant ordered them to do. But they would not leave their dead. They would not desert their *inkosi* or Kawiti. Coolly they grouped themselves about their dead, and about the sergeant and Kawiti. Then, with bayonets fixed, they phlegmatically awaited the end.

But Mukadi, too, disobeyed the sergeant's orders that day. At his orders the buglers sounded the charge and he led the garrison out to the rescue.

Laughing and shouting like schoolboys released from irksome tasks, Mukadi's men intercepted the charging warriors. They stabbed and parried, parried and stabbed until the warriors, finding the disciplined fighting of the Black Watch too much for them, broke and fled before the menace of the reddened steel of bayonets.

Late that afternoon, just before retreat, the bugles sounded the "Last Post" as the bodies of the two privates were lowered into the graves prepared for them. A firing party, consisting of the whole garrison, fired three volleys into the air.

"It was their right," the sergeant said.

That night the signal drum was silent and no mock attacks disturbed the peace of the veld. Nor, when a mounted relief party arrived at noon the following day, were there any warriors to dispute the crossing of the ford. They had trekked away from the place under cover of darkness.

The C.O. and the gray suited civilian rode with the relief party.

"That commission is still waiting for you, Sergeant," the civilian said, after he heard the full story of the defense of

the camp and of the fight on the *kopje*.

"I don't want it, sir," the sergeant replied.

"But, damn it, man, you deserve it! You practically put an end to the rebellion when you killed that witch doctor."

"Kawiti killed him, sir."

"Umph! You quibble, Sergeant. But Kawiti shall be rewarded. I will make myself personally responsible for that."

"Thank you, sir," the sergeant said quietly. "And the rebellion, sir—" he looked at the C.O.—"is it really over?"

"Almost. We expect some trouble from an *impi* that's taken to the hills down Usher way. But that's all. We'll have trouble getting at them, though."

"My men would like to help, sir," the sergeant said, "if you think they've earned the right."

"They have and shall," the civilian said. "That's your reward and theirs, eh, Sergeant? See to it, Colonel."

"Very good, sir."

"Sergeant, parade your men. They will turn in their ammunition and receive a new issue."

"They still have forty-seven rounds, sir, of the old issue," the sergeant said calmly.

"You mean—" the C.O. and the civilian looked calculatingly at the sergeant —"you've only fired three rounds since you've been out here?"

"Exactly, sir. The whole garrison acted as firing party at the burial of two privates, killed in action, sir. It was a larger firing party than laid down in the regulations, sir, but I thought the men deserved it."

He noted the look of relief which came into the eyes of the civilian.

"My God!" that man exclaimed. "Only fired three rounds—and them into the air. Then you don't know—"

He stopped at the C.O's warning cough.

"Colonel," he said presently, and it is a matter of record that this civilian who dreamed of big empires was, at times, unduly sentimental, "kindly request the gentlemen of the Black Watch to parade. I want to talk with them."

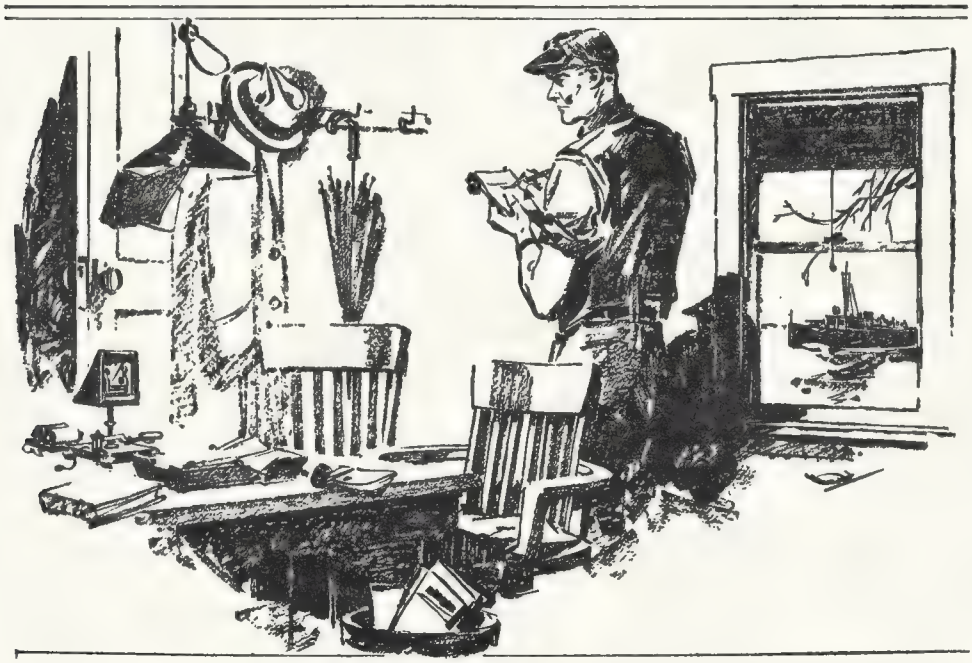
When the rebellion was finally and completely squashed and the country embarked on an era of peaceful prosperity, the survivors of the Black Watch were rewarded with medals, land grants and gifts of cattle and money.

But they prize more than anything else the three spent cartridges which, strung on a piece of string, they wear about their necks, under their tunics.

These cartridges remind them of the time of their first testing, of a time when they stood firm, though their loyalty and discipline was put to a severer strain than even their beloved sergeant ever guessed.

PRIVATE WIRE

By L. G. BLOCHMAN



EVEN before the murder Charlie Gray knew there was something not quite ordinary about this job Belden had got him. Belden had told him that the job would be a snap—sitting in on a private wire for a few hours every night. In that Belden was right; Gray didn't have to handle more than five or six messages in his nightly trick at the telegraph instruments in the lonely house on the sea cliff. But Belden had not said a word about the mystery that seemed to surround every detail of his new position.

The messages Gray handled were chiefly statements regarding quantities of lobster, halibut or sole, with occasional mention of crates of oysters, but he was under no illusion that he was working for a fishing concern—not when half the messages came to him by blinking lights of a ship several miles offshore at three o'clock in the morning, to be retransmitted immediately over the private wire. Gray had no idea where the private wire led.

His efforts to get chatty with the operator on the other end, with a view to discovering his location, met with the rebuff of silence. Efforts to talk to the much tattooed, well muscled pair of men who lived in the lonely house with him, met a similar fate. The two men, obviously foreigners, were singularly ignorant of English—except to read the messages that Gray handed them. As for Joe Romer, the man who had employed him, Gray did not see him be-

tween the time he arrived at the cliff house and his fourth day on the job.

It was on the fourth day that a man was killed almost under Gray's nose. Gray slept in the daytime, and had just got up, late in the afternoon. He was standing at the head of the stairs, ready to go down, when the man came in the front door, unannounced. Gray had never seen him before, and was just noticing that he wore a derby hat and broad toed shoes, when Joe Romer came into the hall. Romer looked as if he were glad to see the stranger, closed the door behind him, then shot him in the back. The stranger fell over on his face.

When Romer opened the door of a hall closet and was dragging the stranger toward it, Gray backed away from the head of the stairs. He suddenly went weak in all his joints. Nausea wrenched his stomach. The thing to do, he decided, was to pretend he had still been asleep and seen or heard nothing. He went back to bed.

Gray did not close his eyes in tranquil sleep for two days after that. Every time he tried to doze off, the vision of the murdered stranger haunted him, as though the place were not eery enough already, with the mournful boom of the surf breaking monotonously under the cliff, and the cry of sea birds, desperate and unsettling, piercing even the wail of the wind. He was pale and hollow eyed by the time Saturday arrived. On Saturday Romer had promised to drive out and get him, to spend the weekend in the city.

Gray wanted to see his wife, so Romer dropped him at the Bulgravia Apartments. The Grays were staying there with Mrs. Gray's brother—which made it impossible for Gray to unburden himself to his wife, because her brother was a police officer. Not that he had any idea that she would say anything to her brother, but she might, and he didn't want to involve another of the family. He had to tell somebody, though, or he would go crazy. He would tell Hugh Belden. Belden had got him the job in the first place.

Charlie Gray and Hugh Belden had been press telegraphers and friends for fifteen years. For fifteen years Gray had sat in a glass cage in the news room of a small city paper, while Hugh Belden sat at his key in the press agency bureau in the big city. Over the wire that connected them flowed the daily report of nations in turmoil, of fortunes made and swept away, of men hating and loving and dying. A red tobacco can wedged in behind Charlie Gray's sounder made it click more resonantly as the dots and dashes registered in Gray's brain through the strange abbreviations of press telegraphers, to be translated into typewritten copy by Gray's tireless fingers.

During breathing spells in the day's news, light banter would go out over the wire, personal chatter between telegraphers, an off-color story or two. It was thus that Gray and Belden became acquainted. It was five years before they met personally. They had been close friends ever since.

One day the wire chief walked into the news room and cut out Charlie Gray's sounder and "bug". The machine age was reaching out to destroy Gray's career. Two new and shiny machines were installed in place of Gray's instruments. The wire chief called them teleprinters, and they whirred efficiently all day long, disgorging rolls of yellow paper on which were printed messages typed in distant cities. Electricity was displacing Gray's brain and fingers—and Gray was fired.

The next few months Gray ate deeply into the savings that had survived his amateur interest in thoroughbred horses. He had difficulty in finding work, because he had lost not only a job, but a profession. He was not merely a telegrapher; he was a press telegrapher. And he had a hard time adapting himself to a commercial job of telegraphy.

He had thought of going to the city, but Hugh Belden had lost his job, too, to a teleprinter. Things looked pretty

black. Then, about two months after that, Belden sent him a telegram—it seemed strange getting a wire from Belden "overhead" after all the years they had conversed by private wire—to come to the city at once. There was a job for him.

It seemed to Gray impossible that he had been at this job only a week, a weird week at a lonely house on the sea cliff, a week of vaguely mysterious events culminating in a very definite horror. And it seemed now inevitable that he should give it up, even though it should again throw him out of work, this time in a strange city. Well, he would talk it over with Hugh Belden.

GRAY stopped in front of a brownstone house on the lower west side. He walked timidly up the stoop, a thin, square jawed little man with graying temples visible beneath a gray cap. He rang the bell marked Belden. The electric latch clicked deliberately several times. Gray pushed the door open.

He walked up two dark flights of stairs. There was an unpainted streak up the center of the steps where a carpet runner had once been. The house smelled musty.

Gray knocked at Hugh Belden's door, which was opened, first a crack, then wide.

"Come on in, Charlie," said Belden.

He had been shaving. Most of the lather had been scraped off his round, ruddy, fat face, but his triple chins were still concealed by soap. He wore only a pair of shorts, and his corpulence overflowed the top of them like a toy balloon squeezed near one end.

"Sit down, Charlie," he said. "I'll be with you in two shakes. How's the new job?"

He disappeared into the bathroom without waiting for an answer.

Gray sat down at a table. There was a square faced bottle on the table, with two glasses. Charlie Gray looked about him instinctively. He looked into the bathroom, and noticed that the door on the other side, the door leading into the bedroom, was closed.

"Hugh," said Gray, when Belden appeared, buttoning his shirt, "what kind of a job did you get me into, anyhow?"

Belden looked at the little telegrapher with eyes that smiled knowingly.

"By this time," he replied, "you must have found out as much about it as I could tell you."

"It's not on the level, is it?" asked Gray.

"Sure it is," objected Belden. "You'll never have to ask twice for your pay, and I can guarantee you'll be treated white."

"That's not what I mean," said Gray. "I mean, there's sort of a shadow of jails on the whole business, isn't there?"

"Hell!" said Belden. "Nobody goes to jail any more, except for trying to beat the income tax."

"I don't like it," said Gray. "I don't know whether it's rum running or hijacking, or just common smuggling; but I know that place is giving me the blue creeps. I'm not going back there tomorrow. I'm going to quit."

"Don't be dumb!" argued Belden. "You're getting good money out there, aren't you? You're supporting the wife again, and the jack you get doesn't smell any from the way it's made, and it comes regular. I wouldn't risk being out in the cold again, with Winter coming on, and I don't imagine your wife would think much of the idea either. Why, Charlie, if you don't take that money, somebody else will. I want to see it get into the mitts of somebody who can use it properly."

Belden took the two glasses from the table, turned them over to shake out the few drops remaining in the bottom of each, set one in front of Gray and pushed the bottle toward him.

"I'm going to clear out," Gray insisted, "because I don't want to get mixed up in murder. I guess you know that Romer killed a man out there Thursday."

"Yeah?" said Belden. There was a mild note of surprise in his voice, but no change of expression on his ruddy face. "Who did Romer kill?"

"I don't know," said Gray. "I'd never seen the man before. He just walked into the house, and Romer shot him in the back. It was a hell of a thing. They got rid of the body over the cliff."

"Maybe it was just an accident," said Belden, a queer expression in his eyes.

"Hell, no, it wasn't an accident!" said Gray. "I saw the whole business, and I know what it was, all right. I haven't said anything to anybody. I pretended I was asleep. I wanted to talk to you before I did anything about it."

Belden's short fingers drummed on the table top.

"What did you figure to do?" he asked.

"The only thing I can do is resign," said Gray. He had a high pitched voice that was almost a squeak when he got excited. "I'm not going to get mixed up in any murder. Why, Dora—"

"Have another drink," said Belden. He passed the bottle without dropping his stare from Gray's eyes. "I suppose you're sore because I didn't get you a job as vice-president of Western Union," he said. "I'm sorry, but I did the best I could for you. Of course, if it ain't good enough—"

"For cryin' out loud, don't get the idea I'm finicky, Hugh," pleaded Gray, alarmed at being accused of ingratitude. "Hell, I'd stick to that spot if it was only rum running or something like that. But murder, Hugh—" Charlie Gray made a hopeless gesture of protest. "My God, Hugh, I've been having nightmares about it ever since."

"Well, what am I supposed to do about it?" demanded Belden. "If this bird was killed, like you say, why there's nothing I can do to bring him back to life."

"I know," said Gray, impatiently. "But—I thought you might be seeing Joe Romer before tomorrow night."

"Well?"

"Well, in case you were going to see him, I thought you could tell him not to bother coming around to pick me up. I'm not going back to that job tomorrow night."

"Ain't that a little stiff—quitting without giving him a little notice? Where do you suppose he's going to pick up a man at the last minute to take your place?"

"There's plenty of brass pounders looking for jobs these days," said Gray. "If he wants me to, I can steer a few his way. But you tell him I'm through, won't you?"

Hugh Belden got up. There was a shadow of a frown on his forehead as he walked to a littered smoking stand and rescued the butt of a cigar reposing on its edge. With a match he cleaned the ashes off the slightly frayed end, then put the butt into his mouth and lighted it. He took his time about blowing out the match, and puffed away a moment before he said—

"Charlie, I'm a friend of yours, ain't I?"

"Sure," Gray agreed.

"I thought I was doing a friend a favor when I got you that job," Belden went on. "I know I'm doing you one now when I tell you you'd better hang on to it."

"I can't, Hugh."

"Try it a little longer, anyhow," Belden urged. "Don't quit now, Charlie."

A frightened grimace twisted Gray's face. His eyes were dilated with despair.

"I can't go back there, Hugh," he pleaded in an uneven voice. "I'd go batty. And even if I didn't, you got to figure the angle of Dora's brother being a cop."

Belden was still drumming on the table. His head turned slowly until he could look into the bathroom. Then it turned slowly back.

"That's final then?" he asked.

"Absolutely," said Gray.

Belden raised a fat hand, let it drop wearily to the table, then arose suddenly.

"Suit yourself," he said.

Charlie Gray extended a hand. He thought that Belden shook it with unusual fervor.

"You're not sore at me, are you?" asked Gray. "It was damned fine of you to get me that job, but you can see how I feel about it since the—since that—"

"Sure, I see," said Belden.

He seemed impatient to be rid of Gray now. He had opened the door and, with plump arm around the smaller man's shoulder, he was easing Gray into the hall.

"Well, so long," said Gray.

"I'll be seeing you," said Belden.

BELDEN came back into the room, closing the door quickly. He stood a moment with his hand on the knob. He did not move at the sound of another door opening and closing behind him. With great deliberation he turned to face the slim and dapper young man who had just come into the room through the bathroom.

The newcomer was dressed in a closely tailored toast-brown suit. Pointed shoes poked out from under knife creases in his trouser cuffs, and the maroon border of a silk handkerchief protruded from his breast pocket. The fuzzy brim of a fawn colored hat nearly obscured a pair of dark eyes set very close together. Without a word, the man in brown sat down behind the table, inserted a cigaret in a long ivory holder, snapped a flame from a gold lighter, then rested his sharp chin on the palm of his hand as he blew a cloud of smoke toward Belden. Belden took a chair opposite him, chewing industriously on his cigar end.

"Got a message for Joe Romer? Well, here I am!" said the man in brown.

"The acoustics are pretty good in this apartment, Joe," said Belden. "I guess you heard as much as I did."

"I heard plenty," said Romer.

The difficult processes of thought wrinkled the narrow space between his eyes. Slowly the frown disappeared. He reached for the telephone that stood on a stack of phone books on the floor in a corner. He lifted the receiver and wedged it between his shoulder and ear.

"Gimme Postal Telegraph," said Romer into the transmitter. "Hello, girlie—this is a prepaid telegram going to Mister Charles Gray, Bulgravia Apartments, City. . . . Yeah. . . . Here's the message. . . . 'Am in terrible fix. Need your help bad. Come immediately my apartment.' The signature is Hugh Belden. . . . Charge it to the phone. . . . Sure, this is Belden speaking."

Romer hung up. He leaned back and blew a smoke ring, with the air of a man who is highly satisfied with himself.

Belden had stopped chewing his cigar.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "What's the idea of the wire, and my signature?"

"I want to see Gray," said Romer. "I thought he'd come for you quicker'n he'd come for me."

"What do you want him for?" asked Belden uneasily.

"I just want to talk to him," said Romer.

"I'll probably be seeing him tonight. Couldn't I take him the message?"

"Naw," said Romer. "This thing I want to see him about is personal."

"How personal?"

"Well, I'll tell you. When he was talking to you, he seemed a little worried because he hadn't been interduced to that guy I plugged the other day. I thought I'd explain that the guy was a Federal dick who happened to stumble on our little seaside villa by mistake, and that I didn't mean no impoliteness—"

Belden ran his thumb nervously over his three chins in quick succession.

"Kidding aside, Joe, you haven't got any doubts about Charlie, have you?" asked Belden anxiously. "Charlie's all right."

"Yeah, I know," said Romer without expression. "He's a swell guy."

"You won't have to worry about

Charlie," Belden insisted. "He won't write the papers what he saw at the seashore."

"I ain't a bit worried," declared Romer.

He spoke with ends of his lips. His cigaret holder remained clenched between his teeth as he talked. He stared at Belden unblinkingly. Belden shifted his haunches slightly, as though he were afraid of sticking to the seat of his chair.

"Are you going to try talking Charlie into staying with that job?" Belden inquired.

"Maybe I might," said Romer.

"Or—you got another job you want to put him on?"

Romer did not answer. He was very much engrossed in the process of digging a cigaret end out of his holder with a black headed pin he had taken from the back of his toast-brown lapel. He inserted a fresh cigaret into the ivory tube, but paused a moment before striking fire from his gold lighter.

"How soon you think your pal will show up after he gets the wire?" asked Romer.

Belden shrugged, and Romer regarded him curiously.

"Probably fifteen minutes," said Belden. "Why?"

"I was just wondering," said Romer, narrowing his eyes. He suddenly flashed flame from his gold lighter.

Belden was staring at Romer with eyes that did not quite focus. His thumb was again exploring his chins. His forehead was dewy with perspiration. He pushed back his chair and made a tentative movement to get up, but did not arise.

"You won't need me around," he began.

"Keep your seat!" ordered Romer. "I'll need you plenty."

"What for?" asked Belden.

"Wait and see," said Romer, with a half smile.

Belden raised a chubby hand and dropped it wearily to the table.

ROMER got up and walked briskly around the room, hands in his trousers pockets, cigaret holder cocked at a jaunty angle. Belden turned in his chair to watch what appeared to be a survey of the apartment. The perspiration had begun to trickle down the fat telegrapher's temples. He wiped his face with a large handkerchief.

Romer closed a window that was open a few inches. He opened the door at the head of the stairs, closed it again, leaned against the wall and squinted toward the table. Then he stooped and began rolling back the rug from the door.

Belden sprang to his feet with agility unexpected in one of his bulk.

"What's that for?" he demanded.

"Stains is hard to get out of carpets," Romer explained.

The color faded from Belden's fat cheeks and returned in one small but very pink spot under each eye. He swallowed twice.

"Nix, Joe!" he said at last. "No rough stuff here."

Romer straightened up and replaced his hands deliberately in his trousers pockets.

"You oughta feel flattered," he said. "It shows I trust you. It shows I trust you even more than when I let you take that five grand to get you outa that mess, last—"

"I'll work that off; don't worry—"

"I ain't a bit worried," said Romer.

Belden gripped his arm.

"You can't plug Charlie Gray here in my place, Joe!"

Romer shook off Belden's grip, removed his hands from his trousers pockets and jammed them into his coat pockets.

"Listen!" snapped Romer. "I know what I'm doing. They found this Federal bird's body this morning. It washed up on the beach about eight miles below our place. The only chance of anybody pinning that job on me is a witness who happens to have a con-

science and a cop in the family."

"This is my apartment, Joe!"

"Can that! I got to protect myself, ain't I? Didn't I tell you I was being tailed? First chance I saw clear I sneaked up here. And I'm going to stay outa sight for a few days. Somebody's been talking outa turn about that Greek truck driver that got killed last month, and I don't crave to sit down on fifty thousand volts on his account. And that eye witness friend of yours don't get me the least bit more enthusiastic about electricity. I got to do the job here!"

"You can't!" said Belden.

"Can't?" countered Romer. "Try to stop me." He grinned. "But you're too smart. You know damn well Joe Romer's got St. Vitus dance in his trigger finger."

Belden averted Romer's steady gaze and said nothing. Romer pulled the table to one side of the room and placed two chairs on the opposite side near the window. He put a third chair behind the table and sat down.

"You'll open the door for him," said Romer. "You open it part way and head him for those chairs over there. He'll have his back to me. You hang behind a step to close the door. That leaves him uncovered. Then—"

To punctuate his unfinished sentence, Romer produced a long, blue barreled revolver with a front sight as big as half a dime. He broke the pistol and spun the cylinder briefly to examine the cartridges. Then he snapped it shut and placed it on the table in front of him.

"Bring on the little eye witness!" he said.

Belden made no comment. He pulled a chair nearer to the window and sat down, looking out into the court at a tree which grew close to the house, pushing its branches almost to the window. For a moment he appeared in deep contemplation of the leaves, a rusty, Autumn brown, falling in intermittent showers. Then he picked up a burned match from the window sill, broke it and started cleaning his fingernails.

Romer smoked in fidgety silence for five minutes. He was the first to speak.

"What the hell are you thinking about?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Huh? What was I thinking about?" echoed Belden, as though he had just been aroused from deep slumber. "Why, I was just thinking that you'd have to be getting a new telegrapher—"

"Yeah, and I'll dig one up for myself," said Romer. "No more friends of yours."

"What you ought to get," said Belden slowly, "is one of these new automatic outfits. They're like typewriters, only they work by electricity, and they write a hundred miles away—or a thousand. Any boob can run one. The papers are all getting 'em. They got a lot of advantages over a man. For instance, the machine don't get hungry when it's not working."

"And it can't testify in court, either," said Romer.

Again the conversation died. Belden went on cleaning his nails. Romer looked at his watch. He lighted a cigaret, tamped it out after four puffs and almost immediately lighted another.

The doorbell rang. Both men jumped as though they had not been expecting it. Belden remained seated.

"Get on that door!" ordered Romer.

Belden arose slowly. He walked across the room with heavy, deliberate steps. He had not gone more than halfway when the bell rang a second time. Romer picked up his gun, squeezed the butt, swung the sights into line with the door. Belden reached out a fat forefinger toward the button that worked the latch on the street door downstairs . . .

CHARLIE GRAY had found the telegram waiting for him when he got home. He puzzled over what "terrible fix" Belden could have got into in the few minutes following his departure. The

tone of the telegram, however, was no puzzle. Here was an unmistakable plea for his immediate presence. He couldn't ignore it.

He retrieved his hat and started out again. His brother-in-law, who was on his way to report for duty, offered to drive him downtown in his flivver.

When the car drew up in front of the brownstone house in the lower west side, the brother-in-law offered to wait for Gray if he was not going to be long.

"Don't bother," said Gray. "I haven't any idea how long I'll be. Better go on without me. Thanks just the same."

The police sergeant stepped on the starter.

Charlie Gray walked up the stoop alone. He rang the bell marked Belden. When he got no response, he rang a second time. The electric latch clicked briefly. He pushed the door open. The clicking stopped.

Behind him, the starting motor of the police sergeant's car was still grinding, irregularly, unwillingly. Still grasping the door handle, Gray looked over his shoulder. His brother-in-law was climbing out of the car with a crank in his hand.

"Need any help, Bert?" called Gray.

"Nope. Battery's just run down," said the police sergeant.

Then Gray noticed that the latch was clicking again. A strange sensation passed over him like a chill when he realized that the hand of a telegrapher was clicking the latch, when he recognized the clicks grouping themselves into letters, the letters into the curt abbreviations of a press telegrapher.

As a preoccupied person can recall and fit meanings to words spoken several seconds previous, words he did not realize he had heard, so did Charlie Gray's mind go back and pick up the clicked message from the beginning. Over this makeshift private wire came words of warning:

"Run—Romer here—to kill you—"

The clicking stopped. Gray, stunned, hesitated a second. He heard the motor of his brother-in-law's car cough, then start its rhythmic rattle. Turning suddenly, he called:

"Bert! Quick!"

The police sergeant ran up the brownstone steps, the crank still in his hand. "What's—?"

"There's a killer upstairs. I saw the murder."

"I'll call the precinct station," said the sergeant. "We'll get the house surrounded."

"No time!" Gray protested, pulling the sergeant by the arm. "He'd get suspicious. He's waiting for me now—to get me."

"Come on, then," said the sergeant. "We'll bluff it."

Belden and Romer heard the steps of the two men on the stairs. When it became evident that the footsteps were those of more than one man, a puzzled frown creased Romer's narrow brow. His mouth opened and closed. He looked at Belden. Belden's face was expressionless.

Somebody pounded on the door with a metal object. A voice, not Gray's tenor, but a rumbling bass, demanded—

"Come out of there, Romer, your hands high!"

Romer's lips were white. A greenish tinge suffused his face. He half rose in his chair.

"Come on out!" repeated the voice. "There's no use shooting. The house is surrounded."

Romer's mouth twitched. He was dazed by the suddenness with which his own trap had snapped upon him, demoralized by this abrupt transformation from hunter to hunted. He said nothing.

There was an explosion. A shot crashed through the door. Then the door gave way under the assault of burly shoulders.

"I surrender!" cried Romer, walking toward the door, his hands raised meekly.

Belden followed him. With his foot he rolled the rug back into place.

Roast Pig of a DIVINE SUCCULENCE

By JAMES W. BENNETT

OUR launch from Tahiti grounded gently on a strip of dazzling white sand. Almost overhead were thrust the towering peaks of Moörea, their summits cloud capped. On the beach, a vehicle was waiting, the driver beckoning vigorously. The conveyance belonged to the early McKinley period, of the type called a surrey.

My companion, Monsieur Ixe, the lieutenant-governor, and I led an active life in the rear seat of the surrey. First I was bounced into his corner, then he into mine.

Abruptly we were plunging down a hill. The driver jumped to his feet and thumped the backs of his mules. I peered out. Our driver was attempting to gain momentum for a hill ahead.

But a sharp gully had washed out the road. I had just time to note this, when the carriage overturned. I was stunned for an instant, although I can recall Monsieur Ixe slapping his torso rapidly to discover if any ribs had been broken. Then he crawled out through a rent in the top and pulled me after him. The surrey, we discovered, was minus a rear wheel. Distant figures caught our eye. The mules had broken free of the rope harness. Our driver was fleetly footing it up the hill in pursuit.

After several moments of waiting for his return, Monsieur Ixe lighted a match and looked at his wrist watch. With a sharp exclamation, he began walking briskly up the road, muttering:

"Our dinner it will be ruin'! The suckling pig, char' to a crisp!"

We had stumbled for at least an hour up the rutted road, when I caught the sound of music. Of an orchestra, it seemed. Waves of sound, marvelously blended and in a consistent minor key.

Glimpsing my astonishment, Monsieur Ixe smiled.

"Wait," he said. "You will comprehend soon."

The road made a final turn, and we saw lights ahead illuminating a long, low bungalow with thatched roof. There was a shout and a Herculean figure came running toward us. He said in French:

"The mules and the driver have just come in. I have beaten all three—for leaving you on the road. I am desolated!"

The Polynesian stared placatingly down at us from his six-feet-four of height. Monsieur Ixe replied a trifle curtly:

"We are not injured. At least I do not think so. I may develop serious complications later. Such things are known." Then he turned to me.

"But I forget. May I introduce you to the prince of the Island of Moörea?"

I was in the presence of royalty.

Monsieur Ixe went on a trace more affably—

"My friend is interested in your orchestra, which we have been hearing this last weary mile of walking."

"Orchestra?" The prince looked puzzled. "Oh, the *himinies*. Certain, gentlemen. Come."

In an open court at the rear sat fully a hundred natives—men, women and children—singing. Here was my orchestra—without a musical instrument on the place. That huge fellow, rhythmically grunting, emitted a sound that I had been convinced was a great dou-

ble-bass viol. The air was sung by the women, while the coloratura parts, oddly enough, were taken by men in a high, true falsetto. The prince explained that these singers were retainers of his. The chant, a saga of his ancestors, was two thousand years old.

After listening for a space, he took us to the dining room where we seated ourselves on the hard packed earth. Already fruit and bowls of dried fish had been set out, amid wôven garlands of jasmine and stephanotis. The food was then brought swiftly. Fried squid; fish baked and raw; raw sea urchins; breadfruit and the Tahitian banana, called *feis*. The raw sea food was soaked in coconut sauces, the most piquant of these being *miti-hari*, a blend of coconut milk and sea water.

Then, before we should become sated, the main dish of the banquet was brought in, brown and smoking: roast suckling pig. As I was engaged upon my share of this, I felt something push rudely at my arm and heard a noise:

"Oi-inch! Oi-inch!"

Looking about, I saw a full grown pig, cannibalistically demanding to be fed upon the flesh of his little brother.

Our host saw the animal at the same moment. Rising, he gave the porker a resounding kick. The pig scrambled from the room.

Possibly to cover his embarrassment, the prince gave a call and his daughter entered. Aged fifteen or sixteen, she was clad in the usual *pareau*, knotted above her breasts. It revealed the more-than-adolescent curves of her body. Apparently for my benefit, the prince spoke to her in English:

"Tiare, s'pose you mak' us little dance, while we eat thees pig." He turned to me. "My daughter, she dance best hula in whole South Seas! Before time, daughter of prrince nev'r hula. But me, I am most democrratic. It is our national dance."

The girl clapped her hands and an old Polynesian couple entered. The man carried a drum of hollowed palm, the ends faced with tightly stretched shark's hide. Squatting in the corner, he began to thump rhythmically on the drum, using first the heel of the hand, then the fingers. The woman lifted an aged quavering voice. The air and the words tugged at my memory as, over and over, she sang:

"Aw-wa Clistia soa-d-jas
Mah-cheeng ahs tow wah."

Then, with a start, I recognized it. In spite of the slurred vowels and the change to a minor key, it was the first line of the missionary hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers". And it was being used, quite innocently, as an accompaniment to a hula.

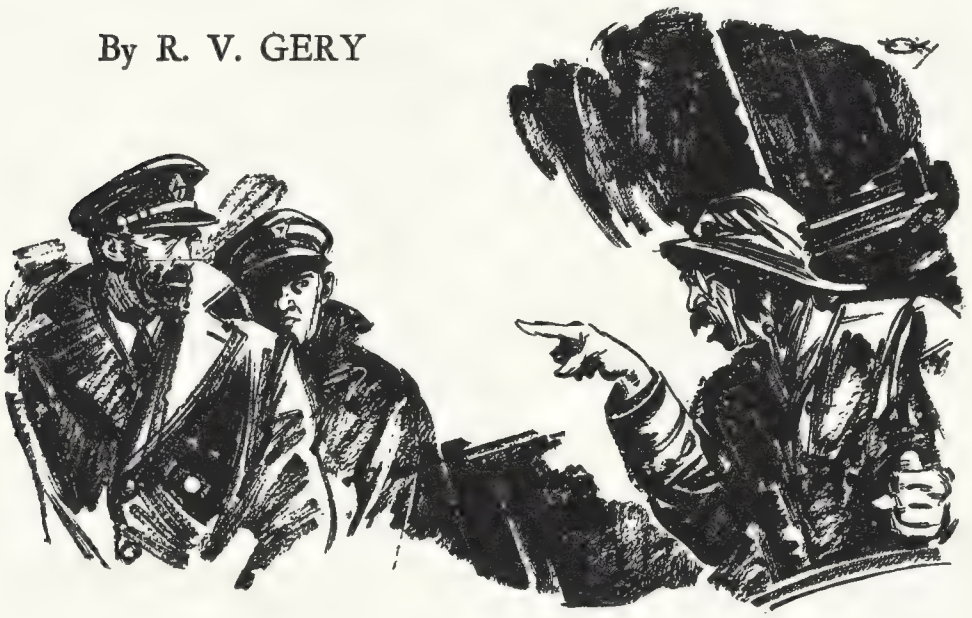
For the girl, Tiare, had begun to dance. Slowly, almost lethargically, she went through the first movements. Then, as the tempo quickened, she threw herself with more vigor and with a heightened voluptuousness into the dance. A dance as old as humanity, as frank as natural mating, as beautiful and almost as impersonal as a sunrise. Her dark hair floated about her face like a purple mist. From her supple young body came the perfume of *hinano*, the Tahitian love flower, maddening to the senses.

When she had ended her dance—with its broad gestures of fecundity—she gave a shy smile and fled from the room. The finale was like a physical wrench to me. I wanted her to go on. I was roused from that dazed state by Monsieur Ixe. Throughout the dance he had been industriously tackling his roast pig; now he stopped eating long enough to say to the prince:

"Tiare is very beautiful. She dances exceedingly well. Never have I seen the hula better done. But where, O Prince—" Monsieur Ixe lifted a hand pontifically—"where, in this world grown so dreadfully forgetful of the noble art of gastronomics, can one find such suckling pig as I have eaten tonight? You are a public benefactor! Such pig, such pig! Of a divine succulence!"

A Humorous Tale of the Sea

By R. V. GERY



SEA LAWYER

MR. CHUBB, the first officer of the *Eurydice* freighter, was leaning over the bridge rail, admonishing an apprentice, when Jedidiah Todd came aboard.

"Yes," said Mr. Chubb, who was of a notable peppery disposition, just at present not improved by a week's relaxation ashore. "Yes—you, you misbegotten, skrimshanking young son of a soldier! Jump to it there! Jump to it with that swabber, or I'll come down and make you, by— What the devil's that?"

The interruption to Mr. Chubb's steady flow of derogation was caused by his eye falling on a man just ascending the gangplank. The *Eurydice* was in process of preparing for sea, London River to the Plate, and new faces were accordingly nothing to be surprised at; but in Mr. Chubb's view there were limits, perfectly definite limits, to what might be permitted to sully the vessel's steel decks with its presence. That which was now about to set foot upon them constituted a transgression of those limits. By miles and miles a transgression.

It was a tall, weedy, stoop shouldered gangling specter of a man, clad in a shocking old frock coat and a black felt hat that had once apparently belonged to a parson. Steel spectacles perched low on a spiky red nose, a mustache of grizzled red drooped lackadaisically over lank jaws; he carried a bright yellow cardboard suitcase in his hand, and an enormous and battered volume under one arm. The creature's walk, however, was steady and determined for one of his years, which were fifty at the least.

Mr. Chubb slowly rose to his full height of five feet four inches, and his normally sanguine cheeks took on a deep crimson hue. His bloodshot little blue eyes popped in their sockets, and the apprentice, who had been staring at him with his mouth open, shut it hurriedly and bolted round the corner of the house.

Chubb suddenly blew up with a roar.

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" he yelled, employing his favorite gambit when in a rage. "What the blue fire and brimstone d'ye mean trespassin' aboard here? Get off this ship, you holy scarecrow, you! Get ashore or, by Judas, I'll have ye put there!"

He paused for an instant for breath, and the man on the top of the gangway took immediate advantage of it.

"Ye're the firrst officer, I presume, sirr," he said with a strong Scots accent and an ironic emphasis on the "sirr". "Then ye'll allow me tae obsairve that yon's no way for to be addressin' a member o' the crew. It's laid doon in—wait now a wee while, and I'll e'en recite ye the exoct words—"

He set the suitcase down on the deck, adjusted his spectacles with much gravity, opened his monstrous book and began to riffle over the pages.

Mr. Chubb remained speechless for maybe half a dozen breaths. Then he squared his shoulders, raised himself on tiptoe and started in on a little serious invective. It was, certain members of the *Eurydice's* complement asserted, much the finest piece of blasting diatribe that had hitherto assailed their delighted ears, and Mr. Chubb's reputation as a virtuoso in profanity was most worthily upheld by it.

Its object, however, seemed entirely unimpressed. He continued to leaf his book, pausing now and then to moisten a large red thumb. At length he found what he was looking for and raised his head, peering over his spectacles at the still frothing mate.

"Sirr," said he with acid decorum, when at last Mr. Chubb's fulminations ceased from mere exhaustion, "on page fower hunner an' thirrteen o' the buik I hold in ma hand—'McGillicuddy's Mariner's Compendium an' Guide to the Manners and Customs o' the Sea'; a grond worrk, sirr; ye should peruse it—it's laid doon that 'ship's officers should avoid the use of hectorin' or domineerin' language in addressin' subordinates'. Mphm, ay!"

He closed his huge volume slowly, replaced it under his arm and picked up the suitcase.

"Ma name, sirr," he went on, "is Jedidiah Todd—and ye'll pairhops permit me, wi' all decency an' good discupline, to protest against the expressions ye've seen fit for tae employ in regaird to maself. I'll say nae mair of it for the once, mind ye; I'm a mon o' great patience. But I'd desire ye to be awarè, sirr, that anither sic example, and I'll e'en have tae interview the skipper. Have I your pairmission, sirr, to go forward?"

Chubb's appearance during this exordium was singular in the extreme. Surprise, wrath, mortification and horror chased one another on his broad face, flickering over it in visible waves, like heat on metal. He spoke no word, and the breath hissed in his throat. Finally, and with Todd still looking up at him, he burst into a choking "G-g-good gad!" and fled hastily into the chartroom, slamming the door behind him.

Todd waited until he was out of sight, and then, shaking his head mournfully, went forward to the forecastle. At the door he ran into the boatswain, Harris, a truculent individual and Mr. Chubb's right hand man with the crew. Seemingly he had been a witness of the last scene.

"Ho!" he remarked angrily, doubling a fist the size of a ham. "Ho! One o' them, are ye? Talk back to an officer, would ye? Well, there'll be no back talk to me, cully—so stow that under your belt. Wot's all this muckin's?"

He grabbed the Compendium from beneath Todd's arm, glanced at it con-

temptuously and threw it into the scuppers.

"Damn trash!" he said. "Look 'ere now—another sniff o' that old fashioned talk out o' you, and that thing'll be overside, and you after it like as not! Bloomin' sauce!"

Todd had suffered this insult to his dignity in silence, but now he drew himself up.

"Sirr," he said, "I demand to be taken before the captain. I'm within ma—"

Smack! Harris of the *Eurydice* was entirely unused to this sort of thing from deckhands, and his reaction to Todd's request was swift and immediate. Jedidiah sat down abruptly in the scupper by the side of the Compendium.

He arose, picking up the book as he did so and dusting it off with care. He was not a whit less dignified in manner than usual, save that his lips under the drooping mustache had set into a hard and obstinate line.

"And noo, sirr," he said levelly to the boatswain, "ye'll juist have to tak' me tae the captain. Strikin' a hand is—"

He was interrupted by a growl from a group of the new men standing in the forecastle doorway. A low browed, wizened cockney spoke up.

"Ah," he said out of the corner of his mouth, "that's it—run 'im up to the skipper, mate. Get 'im disrated, the dirty dog! Strook you crool 'ard 'e did—"

THE boatswain whirled about with knotted fists, but Todd thrust himself in front of him.

"E'en leave him to me, sirr!" he said astonishingly. "Noo, ye interferin' wee blastie, wull ye keep yer fule mouth shut and mind yer ain affairs? It's no a part o' your juty for tae be thrustin' yerself in on a matter that's between me and an officer. Stand back, whoever ye are!"

"But 'e strook ye—crool 'ard."

"And if he did, whut's that tae you, ma mannie? Go now—awa' wi' ye oot o' this! Muster Bosun—ye'll forgie me, I've no the name yet—wull ye be obligin' enough tae conduct me tae the captain?"

Harris blinked at him in a kind of stupor, and the motley crowd of Finns, Swedes and Limehouse dockrats behind him gaped round eyed. Todd referred to the Compendium once more with extreme deliberation.

"It's here in McGillicuddy," he announced, "that ony member of a ship's company wi' a grievance may demand —demand, ye'll note, sirr—an interview wi' the master. A grievance I have, sirr, twa o' them, indeed. I've been misca'ed and assaulted forbye. I ken ma richts, sirr, and ye'll kindly tak' me tae the master instantly."

There was a certain uncompromising note in his voice that made Harris pause.

"Captain Brumby's busy," he fenced. "Can't bother him now for the likes of you."

"He's on the bridge this minute." Todd pointed with a lean and gnarled forefinger to where the master stood in conversation with the scandalized Chubb. "Wull ye favor me wi' your company, sirr—or wull I go maself?"

He took a couple of steps aft, and Harris capitulated sulkily.

"Come on, then, damn you!" he growled. "And I 'ope 'e eats you!"

The pair advanced on the bridge, and as they went there was a sullen murmur from behind them. Matters were apparently not entirely all they might be aboard the *Eurydice* freighter.

"What's all this, Bosun?"

Captain Brumby turned. He was a slight man with a small beard and a gentlemanly, nervous manner.

"Man's got a complaint, sir, so 'e says. Name o' Todd." The boatswain made the statement reluctantly, as if wondering what next.

"Eh? Complaint? What is it, my man?"

Jedidiah cleared his throat importantly.

"Sirr," he said, "since comin' aboard

this vessel I have been addressed by the firrst officer—" he indicated the implacable Chubb glaring in the background—"in terrms contrary tae the manners and usages o' the sea. I have also been struck, sirr, by the bosun, the whuch is clean against whut's doon here in black an' white—wait till I show ye—" Once again he drew forth his inevitable book.

Chubb cut in furiously.

"Let me take him, sir," he said to Brumby. "I'll soon teach him a thing or two. He's a damned sea lawyer, this man, sir—and we've enough trouble with the hands these days without that."

But Brumby waved him aside.

"Listen to me, Todd," he said in a conciliatory tone. "You've been to sea before. You can't come running to the master every time you get the rough edge of an officer's tongue or a clip across the ear, man. These things happen, eh, and a good seaman laughs at them. Suppose you run along forward and forget all about it. It might be better all the same, Bosun, if you weren't quite so quick with those fists of yours. I won't have any unnecessary trouble. All right, Todd, forward with you. Mr. Chubb, just a minute."

He faced his angry mate with a rueful smile.

"Difficult fellow, that," he said. "Sea lawyer, of course; you're right there. But the trouble is, Mr. Chubb, that there was a lot in what he said. I'd be inclined to go a bit light with him, I think."

The master watched Jedidiah going forward.

"What d'you think of them?" he inquired suddenly, with a nod in the direction of the forecastle.

"Not much, sir," said Chubb bluntly. "Bad seamen, as usual, and a lot of growlers besides. Shouldn't be surprised if we'd trouble with 'em by the time all's done. I've seen this sort before."

"What d'you mean?"

"This, sir," Chubb said with straightforward candor. "We've a bunch here that don't understand anything but force. Knock 'em down and keep 'em down, and they're all right; but just let 'em get a bit uppish, and there's no knowing where you'll land with 'em. That's why that Todd there'll need watching, if I might say so, sir."

Captain Brumby sighed. He was not a war-like person.

"Very well, Mr. Chubb," he said. "Do what you think fit. Any suggestions?"

Once again Chubb came straight to the point.

"I'd like to be sure, sir," he said, "about the arms, just in case."

"Arms!" Brumby's eyebrows shot up. "What for? You don't think—?"

"I don't know, sir—that's just my trouble. With a lot like this you never can tell. I'd sooner make certain we're all right, in case—"

Captain Brumby went into the charthouse, taking a key from his pocket. He opened a locker, disclosing five revolvers and a couple of packets of ammunition. Chubb picked up one of the weapons and looked it over.

"Unloaded, sir?" he asked curiously.

Brumby frowned.

"Yes," he said. "I don't believe in having loaded firearms about the place. If you're right about these fellows, it's none too safe, eh? In fact," he went on, fingering one of the ammunition packets, "it might be as well if I took personal charge of this stuff. I'll put it in my own tin box—you know where that is, in my cabin. Then if there's any sign of trouble, we can issue it and the arms. How's that?"

FORWARD in the forecastle Jedidiah Todd sat on the edge of his bunk and looked about him with profound distaste. His surroundings were, to be sure, unattractive enough, and the shipmates fortune had sent him did not go to improve his opinion of his new berth. As Chubb had said to the skipper, there

were some tough cases among the score of men at present unpacking sea valises and ditty bags; not, be it noted, the old type of shellback, morose, salt-bitten and scarred, but the modern, argumentative, fractious, sullenly electric—and far more dangerous.

Marks, the cockney, appeared to be one of the ringleaders already. He was talking to a gigantic and ill conditioned Swede, by name Svenstrup.

"Well, Mac," he said to Jedidiah unpleasantly. "Wot 'appened? That bleeder 'Arris get 'is all right? Wot's the Old Man like? Easy goin' codger, I'm told."

"He didna juist appear tae me," said Jedidiah, "to be as weel acquent wi' the usages o' the sea as he micht be; but he's a civil spoken body enough, if yon's whut ye mean. I've nae manner o' doot he'll be seein' reason by the time I've done wi' him."

"Yus," said Marks. "Mebbe there's some others that'll be seein' reason as well, time I've done wi' 'em. Wot abaht Chubb?"

Svenstrup cut in at mention of the mate.

"Yah!" he said thickly. "He gif me any shenanigans, he's bane get dis!" He pulled a heavy sheath knife from his dunnage and held it up. "I steeck him, lak peeg!"

Marks laughed harshly.

"Thet's the talk, Fritzie!" he said. "Don't you be standin' for no bucko from the likes of 'im. Cut 'is liver out, yus, an' the bleedin' bosun's as well, says I. You let 'em lay a finger on me, that's all. 'Twon't be no skipper they'll be interviewin'—it'll be an 'ammock an' a couple o' firebars for theirs, an' lucky to get that!" He scowled darkly at his knuckles.

Todd looked at him in sober amazement.

"Eh-h!" he began. "Yon's no way tae be talkin', ma freen'."

The cook interrupted with the announcement of tea. Marks, still venomous, inspected his tin plate and then spat with a flourish of contempt.

"Ruddy offal," he said disparagingly. "This the kind o' swill we're goin' to get aboard 'ere, Barbecue? 'Cause if it is, you watch out, that's all. I ain't no bloomin' hog."

The cook, uncomfortably aware that the meal just served was, if anything, slightly above the usual run of the *Eurydice's* sea going provender, grinned sheepishly. Svenstrup whetted his knife on his hand, a malevolent gleam in his eye. But it was reserved to Jedidiah to take action.

He had been poring attentively over the Compendium since the food's appearance, his remonstrance to Marks forgotten. Now he raised his head once more.

"Yon's no juist the thing, ma guid laddie," he said firmly. "We have here," he went on gravely, examining his portion with the air of a dietician weighing vitamin content, "whut's nae doot intended for cracker hash; but ye're in mony respects like oor worthy skipper, ma bonny boy—ye've a lot tae learrn yet. Whut—" he fixed the staggered cook with a basilisk eye—"whut ingredients, noo, went tae the composeetion o' this verra unattroctive mess? And mind ye, I'm checkin' up on ye wi' McGillicuddy." He slapped the book open at his side.

The cook gasped.

"Well, may I be eternally sugared!" he ejaculated. " 'Oo the 'ell d'you think you are, John the Baptist? Anythink else you'd like to know, eh?"

Todd spoke mildly.

"Ay," said he. "I'm thenkin', after whut we've juist seen o' this job o' yours, ma mannie, I'd better be takin' a glint at yere galley. I misdoot ye're short o' supplies as weel as o' culinary abeelity. And I've a richt tae be reassured before the vessel sails—McGillicuddy says sae!"

The rest of the crew had been watching the exchange of amenities with some surprise, but at Jedidiah's last suggestion there was an outburst of cheers,

hoots and ribald comment. Seemingly encouraged thereby, Todd advanced directly to the attack.

"Come wi' me," he said to the cook, rising. "I'll e'en inspect ye noo."

"Yus, you will, I don't fink," said the enraged Barbecue. "Me—'avin' a lahsy ginger whiskered Scotchman stickin' 'is red nose into my galley! Try again, cocky, try again!"

"You stow your gab, Barbecue!" came from Marks. "Let 'im do as 'e says, or there'll be trouble. We ain't goin' to stand for no starvation rations on this hooker, an' that's flat. Otherwise—"

He twisted his pock marked narrow face into an ugly expression of menace, and the cook backed toward the door in trepidation. Todd followed him.

"Noo," said he, "let's tak' a look at yon galley."

"You go to 'ell!" said the cook succinctly. He was not frightened of Jedidiah.

"McGillicuddy says—"

"Blast McGillicuddy, 'ooever 'e may be! I'll not let ye into my galley!"

"Ye will!"

"I'll not!"

"Ye—"

The door opened suddenly behind the cook, and Chubb stood in it with Harris at his heels. He advanced rapidly into what was developing into a fair sized riot, the crew urging Jedidiah on in accents that derived from half the countries of Europe, and with more than a hint of threat in their tones. It took the boatswain bawling at the top of his foghorn voice, the better part of a minute to get silence. Chubb, livid with fury, turned on Todd.

"What's all this, you?" he demanded. "At it again, eh? Destroying discipline—that's your little game, is it? Bosun, bring a set of irons and clap 'em on him! We'll hand him over to the dock police tonight. I'll not have him aboard here."

Mr. Chubb was more than a little worked up. Once again there came that hateful murmur from the men, distinct but untraceable to any individual. Chubb ignored it.

"Go ahead, Bosun!" he said to Harris, who had hesitated. "What're you waiting for?"

Apparently the boatswain had foreseen things, for Todd's next move brought the first officer up short. This time Jedidiah did not even trouble to refer to his book.

"Sirr," he said coolly, "ye canna do it. Tae begin wi', there's only yin man aboard that's empowered for tae order irons, as ye're weel aware—and he's no yerself. And moreover, sirr, I'd point oot tae ye, wi' verra great respect, that takin' concerrn ower the quality o' the provisions supplied canna be held tae be a breach o' discupline."

Chubb's face turned a mottled purple.

"Why, damn your eyes for a cantankerous jackass!" he roared. "You'll be telling me next—"

"It says i' McGillicuddy—" Jedidiah began unweariedly.

"Oh, to hell with McGillicuddy and you too!" Chubb restrained himself from violence with a mighty effort. "Now you just pay attention to me, Todd. I've an eye on you for the rest of this voyage, and if there's to be any more of this sort of thing, you'll find yourself in bad trouble, that's all. Get that now!"

He swung on his heel and went out. He did not escape hearing, however, the sardonic snicker that followed him.

Marks jumped up and clapped Jedidiah on the back as the door closed.

"Good boy!" he chortled. "Ow, we've got 'em on the run now. You keep it up, Mac! Just you wait till we're at sea. We'll show 'em."

Svenstrup pulled out his knife again and looked at it lovingly.

"Yah!" he said, showing his great yellow teeth. "Lak peegs!"

Todd eyed the pair of them for a moment without displaying any particular emotion. Then he said "Mphm, ay!" again in what might have been in-

terpreted as an interrogative fashion, and went across to his bunk, where he proceeded to the study of McGillicuddy. He was still there when both watches were called and the *Eurydice* cast off for sea.

IT WAS on the fourth day out that matters came to a head. Off Ushant the *Eurydice* ran into trouble; head winds and seas, with the promise of more to come. Ill found, venerable, with wheezy and antiquated engines, she made heavy weather of it from the start, and twenty-four hours' bucketing saw her ploughing reluctantly ahead, drenched and swept by green waters, with her officers and crew weary and red eyed from exposure and want of sleep.

The forecastle hands were not taking it well. Chubb knew that; Harris too. There was a vicious edge to their growls, far different from the privileged grumble of the old time salt; the threatening, reasoned complaining of men with a definite purpose deep down in their minds. Twice already the boatswain had been compelled to wade into the muttering, dangerous crowd, and cuff and kick them into their duty. The second time he had emerged, driving his party before him, but with his rough features serious and perturbed.

To Chubb he said pointedly:

"I'd keep clear of 'em for a bit, sir, if I was you. They're nasty." And Chubb looked at him once, but said nothing; bluster had no place here.

"If I might suggest it, sir," the mate said to the master, "I'd be considering issuing those arms. We're in for trouble, I believe."

Brumby looked doubtful.

"Think so?" he asked. "Mind you, they're having a rough time of it forward. You've got to make allowances." He pointed down over the rail at Jedidiah, clawing his way forward in the well deck, knee deep in a lather of foam and water. "There's one of them anyhow that seems to be standing up to his work."

The red mustached, sour tongued Scot was indeed still jumping to an order, and carrying it out, grim, prickly, but automatically obedient, answering the call of discipline. At every possible moment of leisure he buried himself in McGillicuddy, and he was no less ready for a bicker with authority than he had been; but in his work he still moved like a machine.

Chubb scowled at him, however.

"There's the root of the whole trouble, if you ask me, sir," he said. "Damn long tongued, half educated, insubordinate swab! Knows a fat sight too much—that's what's the matter with him. If it hadn't been for his tomfoolery, they'd have been a sight easier to handle. I'd like to see him put where he belongs."

"I think you're a bit prejudiced," said Brumby. "He's a difficult man, as I've said before, but he does his work, and that's all we want. No, I don't think we'll issue arms just yet awhile, Mr. Chubb. Might get about, and then things'd only be worse than they are."

He turned away, leaving Chubb standing there, with the indefinable impression of having been snubbed by a worse man than himself. Moodily the mate watched Todd into the forecastle.

There the hands were sitting about, talking in lowered voices or glancing round shifty eyed. Conditions inside the steel tunnel were bad enough; the *Eurydice's* pitching, added to the necessity of keeping all ventilators shut, made it a place of purgatory, and in such an atmosphere tempers were fraying steadily.

Off in a corner Marks and the Swede had their heads close together. They had been whispering for an hour or more, Marks volubly and with gesticulations, Svenstrup punctuating his suggestions with slow nods of his shaggy head. Neither of them had welcomed interruption, but at Todd's entrance they looked up.

" 'Ere's Mac," said the cockney. " 'E ain't got 'any likin' for the swine neither. See what 'e says abaht it, eh, Fritzie?"

Svenstrup checked him.

"Na," he said. "Nod yet. Bedder nod talk yoost now, undil we hav—" He broke off and winked knowingly at Marks.

"All right, suits me," said the cockney. "Plenty o' time."

Jedidiah began on McGillicuddy again, head on hands. Any one less preoccupied might have noticed the electricity in the air, the suspicious glances, the sudden little silences that fell upon the men. Something was brewing in that forecastle, but Jedidiah was far away, fathoms deep in some abstruse problem of the "manners and customs of the sea". The ancient *Eurydice* creaked and wallowed, and the roar of tons of water hammering on the deck overhead grew more and more persistent. The sea was getting up hourly.

The door slid aside and Harris thrust in his head.

"Another man on the wheel!" he shouted over the racket. "You, Todd —out with you!"

Carefully Jedidiah set his book down, rose to his feet and reached for his sou'wester. As he moved to the door, giving easily to the lurching of the ship, Marks shot:

"Down't yer do it, mate! Bleedin' galley slaves, that's what we are! Let 'em man the wheel themselves, the scum!"

"What's that?"

Harris advanced a step into the forecastle.

"Say that again, Marks."

For an instant matters were poised on the edge of an outburst. Men turned passionate, working faces toward the boatswain, and one or two started to their feet. Svenstrup, however, grabbed the cockney's sleeve, whispering, and he subsided. Harris glared for a second, as if doubtful of his next move; then he went out, followed by the stolid Todd.

THE *Eurydice* was plunging at the rollers now like a frightened horse. Every few minutes she would fail to rise at one and thrust her rusty nose deep into its gray flank, so that it raked her, stem to waist, with a raging torrent of heavy water. She was growing battered; her rail, out on the forepeak, began to assume odd, twisted contours, and loose gear about her decks was being carried away momentarily and piecemeal.

The master, his little beard dripping, looked ahead over the dodger, as if searching vainly for a break in the weather. By the wheel stood Chubb, watching the helmsman—a sallow, furtive Italian—trying to steady the bucking ship.

"Here, Todd," he said, "come and lend a hand here."

Jedidiah peered about him at the seascape, the reeling *Eurydice*, the serried seas advancing out of the smother, clutching and continuous. He touched the brim of his sou'wester.

"Captain Brumby," he said, "ye should slow, sirr."

The master whipped about.

"Who told you to speak?" he demanded. "Get on with your duty, Todd. I'm in command here."

"Ye should slow, Captain." Jedidiah's voice was stubborn, dogmatic—and entirely respectful.

Brumby was about to make some irritable reply when Chubb's patience gave way altogether. He seized Jedidiah by the shoulder.

"Shut your damn trap, you dog!" he bellowed. "There's enough of your lip! Silence, and get to the wheel!"

Todd quietly removed the mate's hand from his arm.

"Verra guid, sirr," he said, taking the spokes in opposition to the Italian. "But ye should slow, sirr, all the same."

The master's temper followed Chubb's down the wind.

"On more word, Todd," he said, "and you're in irons—sea or no sea."

Jedidiah rolled the quid in his cheek.

"McGillicuddy says—" he began oracularly.

"Bosun," Brumby snapped in a passion, "take that man down and lock him in the lamproom for a bit. I'll see to him later. No, no irons as yet. Better not, Mr. Chubb, with this sea."

Surprisingly, Jedidiah made little protest as Harris hustled him down the ladder and, with a few well chosen words of contumely, thrust him into the odorous dark of the lamproom. Chubb came to the rail and called down—

"Get another man for this wheel while you're about it, Harris!"

The boatswain ran forward, dodging a sea as he did so. At the door of the forecastle he collided with a man hurriedly emerging. It was the Maltese steward.

"What the deuce are you doin' here?" Harris began; but the man with a quaint squawk of terror dodged under his arm and fled aft. Harris swung the door open.

"Tumble out another man!" he roared.

Marks was standing alone in the middle of the forecastle, pistol in hand. He was just crumpling into his pocket a couple of square pasteboard packages. At sight of the boatswain he snapped the chambers of his weapon home and, without a word, fired pointblank at him. The wind of the bullet fanned the boatswain's cheek, and he turned, unashamedly, and fled; behind him he heard an increasing yell, with Mark's thin cockney squeal above it:

"Come on, boys! Let's gut the swine! Out with you!" Another bullet whistled past him as he plunged for the bridge.

Four steps at a time he raced up the ladder.

"Mutiny!" he yelled at Brumby at the top. "For God's sake, sir, look out—mutiny!"

A third bullet underlined his words, piercing the dodger with a thwack and a tinkle as it broke a charthouse window.

Brumby's jaw dropped and his face turned an even gray. Chubb snatched at him and dragged him to the deck.

"The ammunition, sir," he bawled. "Give me the key."

Brumby clapped a hand to his pocket. Then his eyes started from his head.

"Gone!" he breathed, and careless of further bullets—Marks was still loosing off an intermittent bombardment of the vessel's upperworks—he dived for his cabin. In a second he was out, and no mindreading was necessary to interpret the panic on his face.

"Looted," he gasped. "But who?"

Harris at the wheel—for the Italian had dropped the spokes at the first shot and fled forward—answered him grimly:

"Your stooard, sir! He was in the focsle just now."

Chubb burst into a sudden spate of profanity as the second and third officers came pounding from their cabins.

"Trapped, by gad!" he exploded.

A SILENCE followed, broken only by the howl of the wind and the thrash of waters. From forward there was no sound; the mutineers were out of sight, hidden from the crouching officers by the canvas dodger. Apparently they were not so eager to make their rush on the bridge as might have been expected.

"Harris," said Chubb suddenly, "how many of those swine were armed? Firearms, I mean."

The boatswain turned his head.

"One, sir—Marks," he said. "That's all I saw."

"And he has fifty rounds," Chubb mused. "They'll be rushing us in a bit."

He scrambled to his knees on a sudden.

"Bosun," he ordered, as if Brumby did not exist, "keep her so! Mr. Harvey, Mr. Walsh, try and cover me if you can—I'm going to get those rounds back somehow."

Before any one could stop him, he

had moved on all fours to the rail, climbed it like a cat and dropped with a thud to the deck below. Harvey and Walsh, forgetful of danger, ran to the head of the ladder and looked down.

Marks stood on the forehatch waving his pistol. Ten feet from him, crouched for a spring, was Chubb, empty handed; and creeping up on the mate, sheath knife in hand, came Svenstrup.

With one consent the two mates cascaded down the ladder; but at the bottom they stopped. Things were happening on that well deck.

The lamproom door had flown open, kicked from its hinges by a huge foot. From it emerged a wild figure, black with oil, his grizzled red hair flying in the wind, a berserk yell in his mouth, and in his hand a twelve inch wrench. He smote Svenstrup upon the skull with a foul dexterity learned in some murky dockside school; then, reaching out a skinny arm, he plucked Marks' feet from beneath him. The cockney plunged to the deck, loosing off a shot as he did so; and Jedidiah Todd, with a howl deliberately broke his arm with the spanner, snatched the pistol from him and threw it to Chubb.

"Noo, sirr," he said, "when ye please—"

The first officer, armed, and with a grimly efficient figure brandishing a spanner at his side, was a different proposition from the defenseless officer of a few minutes previously. Step by step the pair drove the mutineers back to the forecastle, a snarling, reluctant mob. Just at the door a man turned and poised a knife threateningly; Chubb shot him through the shoulder without a second's hesitation, and the rest broke and scattered for cover. Chubb slammed the door on them and handed his pistol to Walsh.

"You two hold 'em there for a bit," he said. "Todd, relieve Harris at the wheel. Hey, what's wrong? Hit?"

Jedidiah was rocking slowly on his heels. Marks' last bullet had taken him low at the base of the neck, a tearing gash. He spoke jerkily.

"Muster Chubb," he said, "it's laid doon i' McGillicuddy—it's the juty—every member o' ship's comp'ny—for tae lend assistance tae the officers in quellin' mut'ny. I'm no sae verra—clear—aboot breakin' confinement—but McGillicuddy—"

He pitched in a heap on the deck. Chubb stooped over him, feeling his pulse. Then he straightened up and confronted a couple of scared apprentices.

"Pick him up!" he ordered. "Careful, now, you young lubbers. Easy with him. Take him below, and mind how you do it—he's worth all you brats put together."

"Where'll we take him, sir?"

Mr. Chubb roared:

"Take him? Why, you donkey, take him to my cabin, of course! Where d'ye think?"

The *Eurydice* ploughed her way lumberingly through a sea of brilliant blues and greens.

Chubb, in command, *vice* Brumby confined with nerves to his cabin, paced the bridge. The second officer was taking an observation.

"How's the patient, sir?" he asked with a twinkle of humor.

Chubb laughed.

"Sitting up and arguing," he said, "and that's the best symptom I could imagine with him. He tackled me for an hour this morning on the lovely question of whether an acting captain can cancel a commitment made by his predecessor. Says he's a wee dubious, as he can find nothing in McGillicuddy on the point. I rather believe he'd be pleased if I put him back in the lamproom again."

The second lowered his sextant.

"Rum old chap, sir," he commented.

"H'm!" Chubb puffed out his cheeks and cocked a choleric blue eye at the weather. "Daresay. Wish there were more like him, though—McGillicuddy and all."

A Novelette of the

By HUGH PENDEXTER

THE Rodney House in Bloomingdale was lively with excitement over the news that the arrival of the British fleet at New York was daily expected; which meant that the control of Manhattan Island would be wrested from General Washington. Young James Bean was much abashed and felt decidedly out of place, to arrive and find the household busy in receiving and bidding godspeed to various Tories. He could remember when the place name of that sylvan neighborhood was written "The Blooming Dale".

More than a year had passed since his last visit, and he had fondly expected to find the same restful atmosphere. Instead, the old manor house and beautiful estate seemed to be riven with political lightnings. The discovery that the old, benign order had passed came as a terrible shock. He informed his cousins, Lydia and Cass Rodney, of his intention of continuing his journey to New York forthwith. The transients, fiery young blades for the most part, had given him scant heed because of his somber garb and quiet withdrawal when the punchbowl was emptied in drinking toasts to the King.

Possibly they accepted him, did they notice him at all, as a poor connection of the family, slim of purse and lacking in ambition. To escape being forced to show his colors, thereby embarrassing his kinsmen, he quietly withdrew to the edge of the orchard where his bony sorrel horse was picketed to graze.

The girl was the first to miss him. She summoned her brother, and the two found him in the act of saddling his mount. Lydia stared gloomily at the young man, while her brother, somewhat truculent from punch and politics, demanded —

"Where you think you're going with that piece of crowbait?"

SOME WHO SERVED

Before Bean could answer, Lydia softly exclaimed:

"Jim, you and Cass look enough alike to be brothers. Nay, you would pass for twins."

"Would that our loyalties were as closely akin," sighed Bean.

Finishing with the last saddle strap, he sat crosslegged on the green turf and moodily plucked tufts of grass and tossed them in the air.

Cass Rodney impatiently insisted—

"We can't change our looks, but why the devil can't you change your foolish political beliefs?"

With a sad smile Bean replied—

"Read 'Common Sense', cousin."

"Tom Paine, a damned turncoat! Born in England, turns against his king! A damned staymaker! Faugh! To let such creatures, ranting and raving, influence you."

" 'Freedom hath been hunted round the globe'," softly quoted Bean.

"By the Almighty! If we catch that cheap turncoat, he'll be hunted up a gibbet," passionately exclaimed Rodney.

"Oh, don't, don't!" begged the girl, her fair face tragic with grief. "The cruelest thing this great trouble has worked is to make you boys see life so differently."

"There are no politics in my visit here, Lydia—just a longing to see you and Cass once more. There is no war, no hate between us. Nor can there ever be."

"Of course not, you big rangy fool," said young Rodney.

"You're describing yourself as well

as me," Bean reminded, with an attempt at a smile.

Cass nodded, grinned ruefully and said:

"Blood's thicker than water, of course. Thicker than any rebel Congress, or orders from the throne. I'm glad you came, Jim. I can understand why you feel you must go. God knows we little dreamed that a time ever could come when we would feel we must shun each other."

"Jim," pleaded the girl. "You can't mean that. Isn't it possible for you to stop being a Yankee rebel?"

"My dear, can you change the color of your beautiful eyes?"

The stark tragedy of the times made him look older than his years; and there was great misery in his gaze as he stared at brother and sister.

"To think you'd ever be a damned rebel!" groaned Cass.

"Why call me that, Cass—just because I prefer to live in this free and independent State?"

"State? Bah!" jeered young Rodney. "The rebels are bound to be licked. Some of you—them—are courting the noose. This is a loyal Colony of the king, God bless him."

"But our Congress—"

"Your Congress; not mine, or Lyd's," sharply corrected Rodney.

"—has declared the Colonies to be free and independent States. That declaration has been read at the head of all our brigades," gravely finished Bean.

The girl, even in her sorrow, was deeply puzzled, anxious to get at what might be behind her cousin's quaint process of reasoning. Her voice was soft and gentle as she asked—

"Do you believe for a moment that your General Washington can really hold New York Town, when fifteen thousand of the twenty-five thousand people on Manhattan Island are loyalists?"

"None of them dared to interfere when Tom Hicky was hanged at Grand and Christie Streets for trying to poison General Washington."

"Hicky would have turned the trick if he hadn't been fool enough to fall in love with Black Sam Fraunce's daughter," said Rodney. "He believed she was loyal to the king, and he told her the plan. The little slut—"

"Cass Rodney!" wrathfully interrupted his sister. "Don't you ever, so long as you live, speak of any woman in that way again!"

"Miss Phoebe Fraunces, then, if you insist," grumbled Rodney. "She told on Hicky."

"Come, come, Cass! You're posing because you are angry. You know you could never indorse poisoning," said Bean.

"Jim, at times I'm so worked up I'd indorse almost anything— There, there! Stop being an old sour face . . . Sister, I beg your pardon. Of course, I draw the line at murder. And yet, sometimes I wonder where loyalty to my king ends and murder begins."

"You talk worse than you think, Cass," said Bean. "Everything is upside down. We must travel the roads on which we find ourselves, come what may."

Rodney kicked the turf savagely and demanded:

"But what about your road and mine, Jim? Should they come to cross one t'other? What the devil is all this fighting bringing to you, to me, to Lyd? Weren't we all happy, well fed, our own bosses? Why did some damned Yankee farmers have to plunge us into this bloody business? Dividing families! Setting brother against brother! My God! Think of you and me meeting each other in battle!"

"Please don't," whispered the terrified girl.

"But it might happen, Lyd. I'm going to New York. I shall carry Governor Tryon's indorsement of me. I shall secure a commission. Jim will be somewhere on the other side. We shall meet foes and kill, or be killed.

Meeting Jim might happen," insisted Rodney.

"It would be murder—the thing you're thinking. Even war can't ask that of a body," shrilly protested Lydia Rodney.

Bean gestured for both to be silent, and he said—

"Cass, if ever you stand in front of me and I have a loaded gun, I'll shoot at somebody else."

Young Rodney lost his heat. He stared woefully at his kinsman.

"That it ever should come between you and me, Jim," he mumbled. "All along of some damned Yankee farmers!"

"But you nearly had a Lexington right down in your own New York," said Bean. "When they fought on Golden Hill. It was bound to come. It had to begin somewhere."

"And it will be ended on this Manhattan Island," Rodney grimly prophesied. "See here, Jim— Why be a fool? Your Mr. Washington's licked already —and he knows it. He sent his wife away the last day of June so she wouldn't be a witness to the end of all this miserable business."

BEAN made no reply. He deeply regretted having talked as much as he had. He had seen the second year of the war open most gloomily, with conditions growing worse each month. Now it was August and one could look backward and review the doubt, misery and despair of all who did not possess indomitable will and endless courage. There was lacking the ready response for general service, such as had greeted the neighborhood menaces in and around Boston. Cass Rodney misinterpreted his cousin's silence. He eagerly urged:

"You must understand the truth, Jim. You can't be blind. Why, just think of all the rivalries, jealousies and hates between the Colonies. If it hadn't been for Concord, Lexington and Breed's Hill last year, Virginia and Pennsylvania would have been at each other's throats to determine which should hold the forks of the Ohio. What does the narrow minded New England farmer, on his few stony acres, have in common with the Southern planter? Or with New York Colony? You know that the psalm singing Puritan breed never would lift a hand to help our New York Dutchmen. England takes the whole business as a joke."

Bean's ire rose. He grimly reminded them—

"It was no joke to England's people when they read how two thousand coffins were being taken to America to hold the British dead after the fighting at Breed's Hill."

"Damnation, Jim Bean! You gloat over those poor devils who had the guts to march up a hill against the muskets and cannon of a foe they couldn't see!"

"Boys, boys!" begged the girl.

"I gloat over none of the dead," replied Bean. "But your English are trying to frighten us with stories of securing trained soldiers on the Continent. Our news sheets are foolish enough to play England's game by printing awesome stories about the ferocity of those hired soldiers."

"Never mistake the fact that they are ferocious," grimly warned Rodney.

Bean shook his head impatiently and replied:

"All I can think of is some one trying to frighten a child by saying boo! That's what it is, Cass. Just a royal boo!"

"Wait until you see those same mercenaries in battle, Jim Bean. And see them after a battle, when they have two days of very terrible liberty . . . The dog must be allowed to worry the prey he has cornered, you know. They will give no quarter. You'll say it's something besides a boo once you've seen them at their bloody work."

"It's commonly understood that those hired killers give no quarter," agreed Bean. "The United States understands that. I'll prophesy that after every battle the percentage of dead merce-

naries will be found to be very high. No quarter is a game two can play." As he finished speaking and observed the anguish in Lydia Rodney's face, he grimaced as if with pain. He rose to his feet and mumbled, "It's poison. It's poisoned us. In another half hour we'd be at each other's throats. God forbid we ever build up hate in our hearts, one for the other. I'm riding to town."

"Not now," insisted Rodney. "Not the sad way you're feeling, Jim. It sounds as if we were parting as enemies. To hell with the war! We'll be friends no matter what comes. Wait until afternoon before you set out."

Bean clapped a hand on Rodney's shoulder; and there was great misery in the affection of his gaze as he said:

"I must go, Cass. I only stopped to neighbor a trifle. You and Lydia understand. Something we can't control. Something we all hate. Yet we must go on, following the roads we believe will lead to the top of the hill. God bring us together even better friends, if that be possible. Stay here, under this tree, while I ride away. Let me go and look back and see you two here. . ."

His voice trailed off. He attempted a very brusk manner in swinging into the saddle. Young Rodney would have followed him had not Lydia caught his arm and held him back.

"War or no war, Jim's the best man on earth, next to father," he said as he made to throw off her restraining hand.

"You must stay here," hoarsely whispered the girl. "He was weeping when he turned away."

Rodney stared stupidly at her for a moment, and she was forced to turn her head, or permit him to discover she was witnessing the same weakness in him she had detected in young Bean.

Bean, unheeding the joyous songbirds, rode through the open woods at a round gallop, his chin hugged against his breast, following the path to the south, by Greenwich. He saw several groups of soldiers, garbed in a nondescript manner, and he noticed that on an average only two out of five had muskets. These were away on brief leave, taking to the open country to escape the clutter of the town.

When he was within a mile of New York he came upon such a forlorn looking creature, sitting by the rough road, that he forgot his own misery to some extent. Reining in, he asked—

"Are you sick?"

"Mortal sick. In here," answered the man with a groan; and he placed a hand over his heart.

"Come along with me. I see an ale shop. Some ale, or New England rum, might make you feel better."

"I'd like to git drunken and keep that way till this cussed war is over."

"Drunkenness is a poor calling. You belong to the army, of course. What's your name?"

"Enoch Smith, of Marblehead."

"A stout little town, which sends many stout men to sea to annoy the enemy. I'm Jim Bean, back from leave. Have you taken anything for your sickness?"

The man shook his head, but his gaze quickened as they neared the wayside liquor shop. He eagerly said:

"If you've got a piece of hard money and want to stand treat, I'll take a noggin of hard rum. That'll help for a bit."

Bean swung from the saddle, tossed a coin on the counter and ordered the rum and a mug of ale. Seating himself on a rough settle, he said:

"Drink your liquor, Smith, and tell me your trouble. You don't look like one having a sickness of the body."

Smith gulped down half the strong spirits and said—

"I've got only four weeks and three more days to serve."

"And then you'll be enlisting again."

"Again?" shrilly cried Smith. "Good Lord! Why, I'm praying to keep alive for the next thirty-one days. I've figgered the hours I'll average for sleeping and eating. But think of being killed, or took mortal sick, during the last few days of my 'listment!"

"You're afraid of suffering some hurt?" curtly asked Jim.

"'Fraid? Skeered most to death. Never felt nothing like it till I happened to think how soon I'd be going home. Then it hit me all over. What a fool I was not to enlist earlier! If I'd done that I'd be riding back home afore now."

"I'm afraid I've wasted the rum," mused Bean.

"But can't you see it? Almost ready to start for home—then killed!"

"See here. Go to town with me and enlist for the length of the war, if they'll take a man that way. Then you'll stop your fretting."

"I'll see you and everybody else in Tophet first," was the fierce reply.

YET the two fared to New York together. They found the town agog with excitement over the arrival of some of Admiral Howe's men-o'-war. The Whigs were sullenly silent as they viewed the impressive spectacle. From groups of Tories would sound a cheer for "Black Dick", as the admiral was called because of his swarthy complexion. Bean and Smith secured points of vantage and stared at the warships heavily lounging through the Narrows, like hulking bullies with topheavy shoulders. A man cursed them violently and then chattered with fear. To him Bean said:

"But they've done nothing yet. They'll scarce fire on the town. Too many of their friends here."

"Aye, young sir. But our king-loving Governor Tryon has taken refuge on the foremost ship. The Tories are scrambling to find boats, so they may go out to greet them. Some are carrying vegetables to give and to sell. Women in fine gowns are paying their respects to the German thickhead of a king through the officers. Bah! Turns my stummick — Horray for Gineral Washington!"

The shrill cry was caught up and repeated, as the commander-in-chief, accompanied by several of his staff, came along. Young Bean followed them and found they were bound for the former headquarters in Pearl Street, opposite Cedar Street, which had been abandoned for the Mortier House after the arrival of Mrs. Washington.

Bean recognized Generals Knox, Greene and Putnam, and Major Aaron Burr. What gave an entirely new twist to his thoughts was the glimpse he had of his cousin, Cass Rodney. He was hastening to the waterfront, presumably for a better view of the rapidly growing fleet. It was obvious that he had started from town almost on the heels of Bean, but had selected a different road once clear of Bloomingdale.

Beset by doubt, the ties of kinship being opposed to his strong sense of duty, Bean followed Washington and his staff, until Burr loitered behind. Coming up to him and saluting, Bean breathlessly said—

"Would you give me some advice, Major Burr?"

Burr surveyed him sharply—

"Yes. Be brief."

"Would a young man, who has not joined the enemy army, be held as a spy if he carried with him a letter written by Governor Tryon which would let him enter the enemy's camp?"

Burr's gaze quickened.

"You have such a paper?" he asked.

"No, sir. I belong to the army. Just back from a short leave. A cousin of mine has such a letter, I'm fully convinced. I love him as a brother. We look as much alike as if we were twins. He will join the enemy army. If he could be held, and done no harm, and I could have his pass, I could cross to Long Island before the enemy lands and learn things about General Howe's army."

"Who on Manhattan will vouch for you?"

"General Putnam, sir, or any of his staff."

"Follow me."

Burr walked rapidly on, leading the way until he came up to the commander-in-chief and his staff. He spoke to Gen-

eral Putnam briefly. Putnam turned and smiled a welcome as he beheld the young man.

"Sound as a nut, Major," he assured Burr.

General Washington, overhearing the words, turned his grave face and said:

"Let us hear what is sound as a nut. It will be refreshing if it refers to any of our affairs."

Major Burr spoke rapidly and in an undertone. Washington's serious gaze was focused on young Bean and, when Burr had finished, he motioned the young man to step aside with him. He questioned him closely and soon knew the tragedy which was raging through the patriot's mind. He motioned for Burr to draw near, then told him:

"This young gentleman, James Bean, from the New Hampshire Grants, has repeated to me what he already has told to you. I consider it to be a most valuable suggestion. He takes a great risk, but I must indorse it. Have this young Rodney picked up and placed in restraint. He is somewhere along the waterfront. Simply tell him he is a suspicious person. Hold him in decent quarters and see that he is treated civilly. Search his person thoroughly as your first act. Bring to me all papers you find on him. I have promised Master Bean his cousin shall not be held as a spy. Our young friend is ready to undertake a most dangerous mission.

"If the paper he has described is found on the prisoner, Master Bean shall make use of it. I advise that he cross with General Putnam tonight. If we are to secure any profit out of this venture, he must work fast. Once he reaches Brooklyn he can range forth and make contact with the enemy as young Master Cass Rodney. He must be waiting for the enemy when the troops start to land."

Then he turned to Bean and whispered:

"Young sir, it is not the result of battle I shall need to receive from you. The outcome of the fighting will be no secret to me. But if by any chance or miracle you can learn whether the enemy will land on Manhattan to seize this town, or will strike higher up, say at King's Bridge, you will be doing your country a great service."

"I'll do my best, sir."

"Then await the coming of Major Burr in this neighborhood. May God prosper you and your errand."

He seized the young man's hand and gave it a squeeze which caused Bean to press his lips tightly together. Then the leader of America's forces was moving along to secure a more open view of the Sound and the wooded heights of Long Island beyond.

When Bean turned about, Burr was vanishing around a corner. Three soldiers were at his heels as, like a questing hound, he sought to discover and arrest the young Bloomingdale loyalist. His course was toward the Battery, and Bean took up a position in an ale shop doorway and waited, his heart beating rapidly. His head ached and buzzed as he endeavored to decide whether or not his act had been treachery to one whom he loved, whose sister he loved above all else on earth.

Enoch Smith lounged along, morose of face, and spied him. Again Bean sought to lighten the man's heavy heart with a copious draft of rum. The worried volunteer was sipping his strong drink when Major Burr returned, his martial bearing well in keeping with his fiery spirit. On sighting Bean he slightly bowed his head, but he did not lessen his stride. His hand moved in a gesture, and Bean trailed along behind him. In turning a corner Bean almost collided with him in his zeal to keep at his heels. The Major, staring into a bookseller's window, curtly directed:

"Be at this place after dark. One will come who will say 'Putnam'. Go with him, and you'll be on the Heights of Brooklyn before midnight. Your kinsman was picked up."

"But not as a spy, sir?" anxiously asked Bean.

"Merely as a suspicious person. We found the letter. He will be held until you return."

BEAN slowly retraced his steps, his thoughts in chaos as he realized the thing he had done. He became objective when near the waterfront and again beheld the commander-in-chief and his escort staring at the dark bulk of Long Island, half a mile away. He had no thought of intruding, but he could not help overhearing Washington say—and there was a suggestion of bitterness in his voice—

"Gentlemen, had our Congress not ruled otherwise, this nest of Tories would be in ashes very shortly."

"Sir, it is the only logical thing to do," agreed General Putnam.

"By sparing it, we give them Winter quarters and a central market," morosely added General Greene.

Washington turned to gaze approvingly on the last speaker, who was to become one of the heroes of the war and, by so doing, discovered Bean. He gave no heed to the young man, but his gaze did dwell for a bit on the forlorn countenance of Enoch Smith, who had kept close to the buyer of drinks.

"That soldier appears to be suffering from some mortal woe, mental or physical," remarked Washington.

Bean fancied there was an interrogation in the flickering glance. He saluted and said:

"His enlistment is about up, sir, and he finds life to be very precious. Until he discovered he had but a month more to serve—"

"Month and three days," mumbled Smith.

"—he was brave enough for any army," completed Bean.

Washington's brows lowered as he told his staff:

"Again we find it! The curse of this whole business. Short term men, coming and going. Half a regiment withdrew two days ago. Another half will be leaving tomorrow. We enter battle with men who may vanish lawfully over night. Well, we must do what we can with what we have. But if the Congress would permit us to recruit for the duration of the war, our troubles would be vastly shortened— But more ships are coming."

As he said the last he reached for a spyglass carried by an aide.

It was a grand spectacle, yet one likely to bring dismay to the hearts of the Americans. Ships, ships, and more ships! From up over the rim of the horizon they came hurrying on, as if rising from the depths of the heaving Atlantic. From Halifax and the Carolinas, from the West Indies and Europe they came. It almost seemed to Bean as if the ocean must grow weary of supporting such an armada. Two hundred vessels were arriving. And, as if these were not sufficient, there came another fleet, numbering twenty-five.

Burr, who was using a glass, said—

"Those last will be bringing the Hessians, sir."

Bean, closely followed by Enoch Smith, hastened on to a better vantage point. His interest now was centered in the later fleet, which he believed to be crowded with the much heralded mercenaries. He watched them grow in size until they came to anchorage. A shopkeeper, wondering when it would be safe to display the Cross of St. George, permitted Bean to use his spyglass.

By means of the glass Bean could make out an officer, gray as a badger, standing by the rail and drinking from a huge measure. This man was resting his speculative gaze on the green hills of Manhattan. Later Bean was to know him as General De Heister, long used to leading the men which England and other countries bought and paid for. Beside him was Donop, with a trifle more than twelve months of life ahead of him. He was about to take a boat to Black Dick Howe's flagship. The mercenaries were avidly staring at the fat cattle grazing on Staten Island,

and on the shops and stores of prosperous New York.

From the English Channel to Poland, from the top of Europe to the toe of Italy, these mercenaries, like their fathers for more than a century before them, had warred at the command of the highest bidder. Hesse Cassel alone had sold one-twentieth of her population as fodder for cannon. Knyphausen was on his way with twelve thousand more; and also was bringing that which was to cause greater damage than could be worked by all the mercenaries arrived, or afloat—the larvæ of the Hessian fly, burrowing in the forage of two thousand baggage horses.

"Good land! Such a misery! They'll overrun the 'arth," groaned Enoch Smith.

"Shut up such talk," savagely ordered Bean. "Let 'em come. We'll kill and bury them."

Despite these brave words, his heart was depressed by the spectacle of such might. America's manpower on Manhattan was seventeen thousand, but this was paper strength. Fully half of this total was sick, or on furlough. Every soldier knew the patriot Army possessed too few guns. Just before he went on a short leave to see his people in the Grants, Bean had heard General Putnam say that if all the American works on Manhattan were manned at the same time, there would be but five hundred and fifty defenders for each mile: also, that at one post in the Highlands, there were but forty-odd guns for more than two hundred privates. A similar shortage existed in the garrison of Fort Constitution. From bitter experience young Bean knew there could be nothing more damaging to morale than for a soldier under fire to stand in idleness, waiting until some comrade was killed before he could snatch up a weapon and defend himself.

Bean was convinced that an attack would soon be made on Manhattan. Fortunately for the American Army, however, Howe did not at the time consider Manhattan to be his true objective. Long Island appealed to him as most fitting for a decisive arena.

Enoch Smith, close at Bean's heels, groaned dismally and croaked:

"If all them boats empty all them hellions on to Manhattan, we'll be gobbled up like a turkey eating grasshoppers. And most of our army is over on Long Island."

"I'm crossing this evening. Better come with me."

It was a tremendous problem for the homesick man to decide. With a groan, he replied:

"It's hell-devil either way. Yet they have stout works on Long Island—weak works here. And it's a big island, too. Lots of hills and woods. If there's to be a rumpus we'd have a better chance to hide over there."

"Hide? During a battle?" snarled Bean.

"But good land! You think I'm going to pitch into the fighting with my time almost up!" shrilly cried Smith.

"You should be safe over there," Bean soothed. "All that the lobster backs have to do is to hold East River with a part of their fleet, and keep our men cooped up on Long Island without any fighting. That would cut our army more than in half. This waterfront would be under their guns. They can shift their men from the transports to almost any point above this town and take it easily by turning both our flanks. Do it without making much of a fight."

"Well," said Smith, "if that's what they'll do, I'll go with you."

MAJOR BURR saw to it that young Bean's clothes should, by their richness of material and by their polite fashion, bespeak a civilian of wealth. The régime of the macaroni, a hysteria of dandyism, was six years old. For traveling, Bean wore a plain suit of superfine cloth. In a flat leather box he carried coat and trousers of bluish green,

adorned with gold buttons, and a white satin waistcoat trimmed with gold lace. The stock, neckcloth and ruffles were of white lace. For travel he wore cloth colored knee-garters, but for the best costume the garters were of silk, with bunches of ribbons to decorate the knees, with knee, shoe and stock buckles set with brilliants. The bob wig was the least conspicuous of all his sartorial possessions, being an imitation of a real head of hair.

Bean was more dismayed over his trappings than he had been by the great danger of his undertaking. Burr didactically explained:

"You are not going as James Bean, son of a farmer. You are young Cass Rodney, of a well-to-do family, and something of a beau. I have no idea you will have an opportunity, or find any need, to dress in your best attire. It reflects your background, much like what play-actors call scenery. It is your hallmark. Your father is a rich Tory, a friend of Tryon. You carry the fugitive Governor's letter of indorsement. This Enoch Smith can carry your belongings."

It was early morning when the two soldiers were ferried across along with General Putnam and several other officers. Brooklyn, then possessing some four thousand inhabitants, was vastly disturbed by the British men-o'-war in the Narrows. As Bean was finishing his breakfast in the officers' mess, an orderly appeared and reported—

"The craft anchored off Gravesend are the *Phœnix, Rose, Greyhound* and *Thunder,* and two bomb ketches."

"They may attack us at any moment," remarked a colonel.

"They'll not shell the town," quietly said General Sullivan. "They may anticipate quartering their troops here. Our outposts will give timely alarm when they start to land." To young Bean he graciously explained, "We have vedettes from the Narrows down to Gravesend and along the New Utrecht road . . . Ordinarily, young man, I should feel worried as to the outcome of your errand. But your resemblance to your cousin and your letter, written by Tryon, should place you above all danger until the time comes for you to retire and gain our lines. Letting go of your status as Rodney may be the sore spot for you."

"Private Smith goes with me, sir. He will try to get through with a verbal report. One of us should make it."

"I greatly admire your unselfish way of speaking, young man. But what if you are taken aboard the ship, where Tryon is waiting for us to be whipped?"

"My cousin and I couldn't look more alike if we had been twins. I know the Rodney home in Bloomingdale almost as well as my cousin knows it. I've played there as a little boy. I've visited there often, for weeks at a time. It's mighty hard for me to do this thing when I remember all the kindness I have received from my kinsmen. They will never pardon me for this deceit."

"We must not pause to consider the hurt feelings of Tories while fighting for the life of this new republic. But I understand your feelings. That you have set them aside is to your great credit. Win or lose, the Tories are in no danger except as they join the enemy and face the risk of battle. Now for details. As you know the island, you must leave here before the enemy begins to land. Say, early this evening. Make down to the New Utrecht road, announce yourself as a loyalist and seek lodging at some farmhouse. Even a patriot would not dare refuse you a bed, now the fleet is in the Narrows. Your man, Smith, can claim to be a countryman from your estate who patterns his politics after yours. Now we will use the first light in looking over the works."

Bean was amazed at the extent of the fortifications. They extended from the Wallabout to Gowanus Cove. He counted twenty pieces of artillery, with an interior defense of seven guns. The heights, commanding New York, had become its key defense. Young Bean

stared long and earnestly across the half mile of water at the town. The southern end was protected by Fort George, redouts and batteries. He knew that the hills above King's Bridge were fortified, and that there were earthworks along the East and Hudson Rivers, including those on Red and Paulus Hooks. Also, there was a strong redout on Governor's Island, and between it and the Battery the channel was partly obstructed by sunken hulks. Unconsciously speaking his thoughts aloud, he said—

" 'Twould be fine if we had the men and the guns."

"We must fight our bigness with what we have," said Sullivan. "Our flying camp must 'fly' from works to works." Then he regretfully added, "Manhattan unfortunately is accessible at several points. However, we still pray the enemy will attack the town. Then they would do what our Congress says we must not do—destroy what otherwise will be Howe's Winter camp. But if they should secure King's Bridge, we'd be bottled up. And it's for you to learn, young sir, just what they plan to do."

"God favoring me, I will. I want Enoch Smith to go with me and to be at hand at the right moment. One of us must get through."

Sullivan stroked his chin and pondered a bit, then said:

"It would be death by the noose for him or you to be found by the enemy with any writing on your persons. Of course the report must be made by word of mouth. If you discover they purpose landing on the Island, say the word shall be Manhattan, with a place name added if you are fortunate enough to learn that detail. If they purpose the thing we dread, let the word be King —for King's Bridge."

"Excellent, sir. Smith surely can remember that."

"I trust both of you will soon be back within these works. I really believe you should soon be established along the New Utrecht road. More and more I believe it's best you be there before the enemy begins his landing. Housed by a Tory would be an advantage. Let me recall—I have it! There is one man, a Jacob Finney, who is a stanch King's man."

He called an aide and directed him to present Bean to the various officers and inform them the young man was not to be molested, or detained, regardless of what rôle he might appear to be filling. This searching review by the rank and many of the file was finally finished. Learning that Enoch Smith, having eaten heartily, already had made for the New Utrecht road, Bean was compelled to carry his flat box; and he roundly cursed his late companion for having deserted him.

Sullivan shook hands with him solemnly, and reminded:

"Not a scrap of writing. I will send a man across the ferry at once to explain at headquarters that your information, if you secure any, will be made by word of mouth by you or a messenger; in all probability, by Smith."

AN HOUR later Bean was walking along the road to New Utrecht, an excellent picture of a well-to-do young Tory, albeit one who was compelled to carry his own luggage. At various farms he paused for a drink of water, or cider, and soon learned the location of the Finney farm.

It was midday when he turned into the yard before the rambling structure of a long, low house. Mentally he cursed Enoch Smith for leaving him behind. Aloud he cursed his vitals pink because of the heat of the day. A man emerged from the low doorway and came forward to geet him. His gaze approved of the prosperous figure Bean presented. With a slow smile he said—

"You don't look like, or sound like, a countryman."

"I'd drink the king's health if I could find something besides your damn well water," replied Bean.

"Drop that gourd and follow me, young sir. My cellar can provide you with your heart's content. One stout king's man already has oiled his throat from one of my barrels. In truth, he's in the cellar now and bids to stay there for some time 'less he stops drinking his Majesty's health. What news do you bring? I'll vow you're not a native."

"The king's army will land any time now. They're off Gravesend."

"And the rebel outposts are as thick as spatter down this way," whispered the farmer. "Two stopped at my well. I wish it had been poisoned. My name is Finney."

"You would serve his Majesty?" curtly asked Bean.

"I would, and do. Harky! Look at that! What is it?"

He slyly pulled from his pocket what purported to be a thirty-dollar bill.

"It's damn worthless rebel paper money," promptly said Bean.

"And worthless if a mountain of gold was behind their no-account money," added the farmer with a chuckle.

"How can that be possible, sirrah? If money be backed by gold—"

"There's no gold behind this piece of paper," interrupted the farmer.

Bean puzzled his brows and then softly exclaimed:

"I understand. It's make-believe, eh?"

"Aye, friend. And certain ones of us, devoted to the king's cause, will scatter this in those towns held by the rebels."

"Now I know you are loyal to his gracious Majesty," said Bean, his manner becoming more affable. "But isn't there a risk of having it stored on your premises in such great quantities?"

The man stared uneasily, then suspiciously mumbled—

"Who said it is on my premises?"

Bean laughed lightly and answered:

"But I know you can't turn it out in the fields with your cattle. The ink is too poor to stand any moisture."

"This was given to me," evaded the farmer. "I was lying when I said I had a heap of it."

Bean was secretly alarmed, lest the man's natural fears create suspicion in his mind. He regretted he knew Finney's secret. Doubly did he regret having essayed to learn the hiding place of the counterfeit money. To reestablish himself soundly in the man's good opinion he furtively drew from his pocket the indorsement of Cass Rodney, signed by the fugitive Governor Tryon.

Once the farmer had read the paper, his doubts vanished. He rejoiced in having an intelligent man with whom to talk. He boasted much and even indicated where his store of spurious paper money was concealed. It was the middle of three big stacks of salty marsh grass. The farmer explained:

"It'll weather all Summer and Winter, the way I have it protected. After the royal troops have swept the Yankees in Brooklyn into the sea, or prison ships, I'll bring it out and scatter it, and neither rebel nor loyalist will ever want to see its like again. . . You'll be wanting a bed."

As Bean was accepting the offer, and agreeing to pay in hard money for his accommodations, Enoch Smith appeared. He was wiping his mouth on the soiled sleeve of his ragged coat. Until supper time Bean lounged in the shade. At the table that early evening Finney made the two men known to each other. He left them together when he went to do his evening chores. Smith went outside and sprawled on the warm ground. As Bean did likewise, Smith whispered:

"I've made a profit this quick. This life is better than soldiering."

"How?" demanded Bean, his interest quickening.

"I'll be a mighty rich man if I can git clear of this place."

"What are you talking about?" urged Bean, a new uneasiness seizing upon him.

In a low whisper Smith complied:

"See that middle haystack? I see Finney crawl in there and fuss around

a trifle. After he went to the fields I went in. Big chest cram full of money. Paper money."

"You didn't take any?" anxiously asked Bean.

"But he's nothing but a damn Tory," Smith defended.

"And you're damnably thickheaded," groaned Bean. "You may have killed us both. He showed me some of the money. It's make-believe."

Smith took instant alarm. Bean had to seize him by the arm to keep him from leaping to his feet.

"Mean to tell me it ain't no good?"

"Not worth the poor paper it's printed upon."

"And I've been allowing to live off the enemy for the rest of my mortal days!" groaned Smith. "But he can't know I took it."

"Fool! He will believe I took it. He told me all about it! Told me where it was hidden," said Bean.

"I'll put it back," Smith proposed quickly.

"Remain quiet. He's coming. We must get away from here. General Sullivan advised me to go to the shore and wait for the troops to land. I thought it best to stay in some such nearby place as this till the redcoats had commenced taking to the boats. Now we must go to them. You leave tonight. You're a Tory. If they suspect you, say Cass Rodney, loyalist, is coming and will vouch for you. If Finney finds he's been robbed he'll blame you."

"I'll go. I'll go now. But he won't l'arn anything unless he empties the box. I put grass in the bottom. Box looks to be chuck full."

"You mustn't go now. Go away after he's asleep. He'll probably tell you to sleep in the barn. Hasn't he any family?"

"Only his wife. She's taking care of a woman in childbirth two or three miles from here. But I'll clear out. If ever I git back to town, I'll be aiming toward being a rich man. None of the money's any good. Finney's money is as good as any. But ain't it just my cussed luck to stumble on to that box with a month of dangers just ahead? Wish I could go to sleep in some safe place and not wake up till my enlistment was up! I'll sleep out tonight."

He rose, wandered toward the road and became lost in the thickening shadows.

Finney, finished with his milking, joined his guest. He expressed no surprise to find Smith missing. He spoke of him as being "a lazy good-for-nothing," and then proceeded to damn the new republic and prophesy its speedy downfall.

NEVER had Bean felt more lonesome, more isolated and depressed in spirits than when he was shown to a low room under the eaves. He envied Enoch Smith, now somewhere down the road, with honest earth for a bed and the starry heavens for a blanket. The more he pondered over his situation, the more he wished for the climax to arrive.

He slept but little. When the roosters began to signal for the sun to emerge from the Atlantic, he rose, hastily completed dressing and stole from the house, pausing only to leave a silver shilling on the threshold of the kitchen door. Mist was rolling in from the sea.

"You're up early to see the fun," called out a voice.

Bean managed to control his nerves, although sadly startled. Slowly facing the house, he answered—

"I believe I'll go to the shore and watch the army make the landing."

"It'll be a brave sight. Just what I hope to do. I'll fetch a hoss. We can take turns riding."

"I'll walk, but you can carry my small luggage."

"Not so fast! I'm a good king's man, but I must eat. You're forgetting you're morning victuals. Come in and we'll eat a cold snack. King George ain't sent over any food for us, even though we're his men."

Bean decided he must school himself more thoroughly. He returned to the kitchen as Finney was discovering and pocketing the shilling. Soon a big loaf of crusty bread, a huge cheese and a pitcher of rum were on the table, and Bean was urged to fall to. He was not hungry, but he managed to eat and top off the food with a few swallows of rum. The brief interval at the table gave him an opportunity to put his mind in order and oust the last semblance of disturbance. He faced his task with much concentration.

Heretofore he had indulged in generalities, vaguely trusting that in some undreamed of manner he would be lucky enough to secure the necessary information and would, by some great good fortune, be able to convey the news, unhindered, to the fortifications around Brooklyn. Now he was realizing the great dangers of his quest. For a bit he was overwhelmed by the conviction that he was sacrificing his life with no profit to the republic. His thoughts veered to Lydia Rodney, and it saddened him to believe she would never know his fate.

As the human mind finds it quite impossible to dwell upon any phase of disaster for long, without blindly obeying the law of self-preservation, Bean next discovered he was picturing the enemy as being defeated, by some miracle, and the fleet's departure with him, still in his rôle of refugee. This opened up such a wide vista of adventurous possibilities that for a bit he did not feel the chill fear of discovery.

As the two traveled along the road they found others equally curious to witness the color of the martial scene. When they came in sight of the fleet they were in time to see the beginning of the debarkation. The first of some fifteen thousand British soldiers were taking to the longboats in the Narrows and were coming ashore. Bean's heart sank as he stared at the endless procession of men pouring over the sides of the transports into the endless line of longboats. Instead of resembling human beings, Bean was visioning them as parts of an inexorable machine, painted red.

Vast military stores and much artillery also were coming ashore, marking the enterprise as fairly permanent. Aboard the ships bands were playing, filling the heavens with praise of the gods of war. Midget drummerboys were rattling their sticks with the abandon of veterans, displaying all the pomp and arrogance that one would expect from the King's Own. The onlookers gaped in awe as each huddled cargo of gay uniforms was landed instantly to form beautifully precise lines, which were to extend from the Narrows to Flatbush.

"Nothing can stand agin 'em," mumbled an ancient man.

The tone was morose and Bean set the speaker down as being an American. With black terror in his heart he compared the exhaustless reservoir of fighting men with the little republic's scant eight thousand poorly equipped and inadequately trained militia. And half of this number had to be held in reserve to protect the heights of Brooklyn.

Three roads cut across the thickly wooded ridges to the Brooklyn ferry. A fourth, the Bay Road, skirted the western end of the island and, like the others, made for Brooklyn. The hills everywhere were passable for infantry. The men-o'-war and the ketches were covering the landing. The might of England on that morning impressed the countryfolk as being irresistible. It almost convinced Bean that he was committing suicide in a peculiarly hideous manner did he remain and persevere in his resolve. He knew he was free to retire up the road. He realized his moments of grace were ended when an officer, wearing much gold lace, took notice of him because of his modish attire. The man accosted him, saying—

"You are interested, but not enough interested to take up arms."

Farmer Finney, remembering the silver shilling and wishing to speak a

good word for his lodger of the night, eagerly intruded.

"He's prime strong for the king, mister."

"How do you know, sirrah, but what he's a damned rebel?" harshly demanded the officer. And he rested his suspicious gaze on the young man.

Bean knew the die was cast. He calmly replied—

"We loyalists scarcely can achieve great results until the troops of England are ashore."

"It's easy to claim allegiance to his Majesty, once you feel the shoe pinching."

"Aye. But I didn't have to come here to feel my shoes pinch if I had aught to fear from his Majesty's displeasure. You will find many here loyal to his Majesty, unless they be discouraged by rebuffs and harsh manners." This was stoutly spoken.

"Rot me, young gamecock—"

"Captain Melvin, your men need your attention," spoke up a gray haired veteran. "I will see to it that this young man does not impose any injury upon our troops."

The captain, red of face and stinging under the sarcasm, saluted smartly and turned on his heel. The bronzed officer courteously said to Bean:

"I am General Grant. I should be pleased to know your name and station, sir."

"Cass Rodney, sir, of Bloomingdale at the top of Manhattan Island. The Rodneys are stanchly for the king. I would have shown Captain Melvin my credentials had he given me a chance."

"Youth often is hasty and hot of head. I shall be glad to see your papers."

Bean promptly produced the indorsement signed by William Tryon, born an Irishman and the last royal Governor of New York through the influence of the Earl of Hillsborough, whose relative he married. The general read it quickly; then returned it and said:

"I have met Governor Tryon. He always is devoted to his Majesty's cause. His indorsement of you is sufficient. You must stand high in his favor."

"It might be presumptious for me to claim that much, sir. But he has long known my people and has visited our home in Bloomingdale on several occasions. I'll simply say I certainly can not stand in his disfavor."

"Modestly put. I can readily believe that. It happens he is eating breakfast on the *Phœnix*. I will send you aboard with one of my aides so that you may pay your respects to him."

"That, sir, will be a great privilege, and one I most heartly will appreciate," Bean promptly replied.

GENERAL GRANT spoke to one of his staff, and Bean soon was being ferried out to the man-o'-war in one of the longboats. As he neared the *Phœnix* he discovered the Governor at the rail, watching the disembarkation. As he started to clamber up the side Tryon glanced, took keener notice of the upturned face and genially cried out—

"And if here isn't my young friend, Cass Rodney, come to enter his Majesty's service!"

As Bean gained the deck, his face flushed because of the drama of the situation, Tryon advanced a few steps, heartily shook hands with him and inquired of his parents, and then made him acquainted with several of the officers. The welcome was genuine and most flattering. Tryon was hungry for news and inquired further about the Rodneys, including Lydia.

Bean was at ease in such a situation. His talk was filled with intimacies of the Rodney home life, the neighborhood gossip. He was unreservedly accepted for what he claimed to be.

After Tryon had satisfied his news hunger, his English companions were eager to learn something about the American forces, especially those at Brooklyn, also about the earthworks at that place. Bean readily gave a general

description, but was careful not to exceed in information what could be expected from a refugee whose knowledge along certain lines need be largely hearsay.

"It will be a picnic," remarked an enthusiastic staff officer.

"I feel certain, sir, that they will fight," said Bean.

"Fight and be damned!" coldly replied the officer. "Do you have any doubt as to how the business will end?"

"You should win easily. Yet there may be some brisk fighting."

"Why not say 'we' will win easily?" asked the officer.

"From the nature of the country, well wooded and crossed by ridges and hills, I can imagine how a small force, posted to its great advantage, might make a stubborn resistance for awhile."

The officer opened his mouth to speak, his florid face growing ruddier. His lips flapped together and he remained silent; and from behind Bean a deep, musical voice said—

"I believe it is well, General, never to underestimate your opponent."

There was a general show of obeisance, and Bean found himself confronting a tall handsome man. He was presented by Tryon to General William Howe, commander-in-chief of his Majesty's forces in America, who remarked:

"If all the Tory ladies were as prepossessing as are some of the Tory young men, they would soon win over all the Yankee rascals to his Majesty's cause. We must find a place for you, young sir. So you believe my army is in for much action?"

"Even men of my political complexion, sir, cannot forget Breed's Hill."

"S'death!" growled a portly officer, who had closely followed Howe on deck. "It would be vastly more serviceable to his Majesty if our American friends looked ahead, rather than behind."

"We can learn nothing from history unless we look backward," genially observed General Howe. "But here is a midget in a hurry."

He had reference to a boat alongside, from which a squirrel of an ensign was swarming up the side and eagerly awaiting recognition. General Howe kindly said to the lad—

"Well, young two-penny, what's the excitement in your curly head?"

"I am to report, sir, that the Yankee General Greene has been taken sorely ill and that General Putnam has crossed to take command."

"Would to God it were their Washington!" said Howe grimly. "Aught else?"

The youngster drew a deep breath and reported—

"General Putnam has withdrawn the mounted patrols, which have been watching the roads leading to Bedford, Flatbush and Yellow Hook."

"Egad! My maps, orderly!"

A military map of Long Island was quickly forthcoming; and, after a sweeping glance, General Howe said:

"If this news be true, Mr. Putnam has kindly left an open path to Bedford and the rear of his army. It should be no difficulty to turn the rebels' left flank and force them to engage, or run away under a most ruinous disadvantage. The battle is as good as won! I feel I can relax. Chess ever clears my mind. He glanced around the half circle of officers as if seeking an opponent. Governor Tryon bowed low and said—

"If I may take the liberty of saying so, sir, I can vouch for the adroitness of young Master Rodney as a chess player."

Bean felt his heart contract as if squeezed by the icy hand of a giant. He was familiar with his cousin's fondness for chess and, for a youth, his uncanny skill in playing the game. But none of the Beans ever had learned that ancient game. Nor had James Bean, in laying his plans and in striving to foresee and guard against every contingency, ever dreamed that his ignorance of the game would imperil him to the point of being hanged like a felon.

General Howe turned his gaze on Bean, who, with bowed head, was trying to decide if it were time for him to

dive over the rail in one last attempt to save his life, or forfeit it by drowning. Howe laughed softly, believing the young man was confused by the suggestion he should play chess with England's commander-in-chief.

"Come, come, young sir! Modesty is a rich virtue. But he who whips me at chess need not hang his head before, or after, that debacle."

Bean held his head high, smiling nervously, and slowly advanced, now realizing he must jump into the water. An officer, unknowingly blocking Bean's nearest approach to the rail, smiled broadly and said over his shoulder—

"This promises rare sport." And he nodded toward something transpiring below.

Now at the rail, Bean was hurled into deeper consternation on beholding Enoch Smith. The man was laboriously hastening up the ladder, with a long bayonet, carried by a red faced soldier, urging him on.

Howe's brows darkened.

"What trash is this?" he harshly demanded.

"A rebel, I suspect, sir. He was interested in our landing."

"Every zany in America will, if given a chance, crowd forward to see his Majesty's troops prepare for action against an outlawed citizenry," said Howe, yet eying the suspect sharply. "Why bring him here?"

"He carries on his person a small fortune in Colonial paper money, sir," explained Smith's captor.

Bean's frozen wits suddenly thawed. He said:

"It is Enoch Smith, a deserter from the rebel army, sir. He dislikes fighting and he has done rare mischief by passing bogus money among the rebels."

As Smith gained the deck, his captor reached over his shoulder and unbuttoned his coat, giving him a shake. Packages of the counterfeit bills fell to the deck, and what appeared to be a robust figure quickly became very attenuated.

"You recognize this man, Mr. Rodney?" asked General Howe of Bean.

"As a deserter from the rebel army and a passer of bogus money, sir. Already he has raised a rare mischief in Manhattan Island."

Smith, his wits slowly collecting, while a glint of hope appeared in his dull eyes, swallowed nervously and whined:

"If a man's skeered of cold steel he can't help it, and he ain't no good as a fighter. But let me loose near rebel headquarters and I'll make the fighting men forgit their duty by making them mortal angry when they l'arn they be loaded with money what ain't worth the cheap paper it's printed on."

Howe smiled slightly and said to Smith's captor:

"Come, come, Dorser—different creatures fight differently. Some by stenchful smells; some by poisoning wells and some by debasing the currency of a country. Glare not so wrathfully at this poor creature because he has used his one talent." Then to the prisoner, speaking harshly, "Are those your wares?" He pointed to the packages of bills on the deck.

Smith nodded his head and swallowed convulsively. Howe pointed, and an aide picked up a sheaf of the bills and presented them for the general's inspection. The latter took one gingerly between thumb and finger and read aloud—

"Thirty dollars." Then he dropped the bill, rubbed his hands on a handkerchief and added, "I would say there is a rare hard fortune for the rebels in that batch of make-believe money. To scatter such in great profusion may become a part of England's policy in dealing with malcontents and vile rebels. I'm wondering if it were not wiser to turn him loose to ply his trade. What say you, young Rodney?"

"It's about all he's good for, sir," Bean replied. "He has a way of turning the stuff in small property."

"Gather up your trash, man. Go ashore and resume your queer trade.

But if it's known you've given good money, gold or silver, to the rebels, you shall hang at my yardarm. . . Gentlemen, I would confer with you."

Howe entered his cabin, followed by his staff. Bean turned his back on Smith and heaved a deep sigh of thanksgiving. For the time being, General Howe had forgotten his game of chess; and for this blessing young Bean thanked God most devoutly.

II

BEAN was ashore again and breathing more freely. Enoch Smith had preceded him. Clinton's division was passing over from Staten Island and landing on the farms of Isaac Cortelyou and Adrian Van Brunt. Farmers were flocking to the camp, wearing badges of loyalty. The roll of drums, the shrill notes of hautboys and the mellow voices of trumpets added to the color and life of what, when fully assembled, was perhaps the most perfect army of that day in the whole world. For experience, discipline and equipment its like had not been surpassed on the Continent, or in the Americas.

Bean's interest centered largely in the mercenaries, because of the publicity given them during the Winter and Summer by the news sheets. Their ferocity was accentuated by the application of shoe blacking to their heavy mustaches.

General Heister was an excellent type of the professional soldier. He served his prince by serving England, leading the Hessians with indomitable courage. It was his life calling. And there were men in his ranks who had opposed each other savagely on European battlefields, inasmuch as their princely master had sold them impartially to opposing forces. For nearly three centuries the cantons of Switzerland had supplied France with armies. Now the man markets were to be found largely among the small Germanic principalities.

Captain Melvin, convinced Bean stood well in the esteem of those high in rank, found time to gossip with him and was most affable in his manners. He told Bean, as if it were a rare joke:

"The rebel Washington has crossed to Brooklyn, according to a loyalist just arrived from the town. The man says Washington is planning an elaborate attack, just as if he was opposing an equal army."

"If Washington can't win, no man in America can," said Bean. "Any loyalist will tell you that."

"We'll cook his goose within twenty-four hours. Five ships under Sir Peter Parker are to menace New York. The arch-rebel better take care, or he'll be bagged with his army of yokels and fishermen."

Bean shared the captain's bivouac that night, and was told that General Heister would advance to Flatbush, with General Cornwallis, taking a position two miles farther on, at Flatlands. He broke off to ask—

"What proportion of the solid men in New York are keeping out of this rebellion?"

Bean truthfully replied:

"Two-thirds of the wealthy citizens are pro-British."

"Then they will be happy when the sport begins, which will be very soon. The first move will be made by General Grant. His force will include two companies of loyalists. He will proceed along the coast road from the narrows to Brooklyn. His command may be limited to the loyalists."

Bean expressed surprise and commented on the seeming paucity of such a force. The captain smiled at the young man's ignorance of military technique. He explained:

"It will be only a feint. Just a gesture to hold the rascals' attention from the real thrust at their left wing . . . What's all that commotion?"

The last was prompted by the swirling activity of a score of soldiers on the road to New Utrecht.

"A spy! A spy!" the group of redcoats were exclaiming.

The captain ran rapidly toward the group, and Bean heard the prisoner fiercely exclaim:

"Damn you! Leave me be! Does a spy walk up to an enemy fire? I've deserted from the rebel army, I tell you. Take me to an officer."

Captain Melvin halted and called out:

"Bring that man to me unharmed. Forty lashes, well laid on, for the next man who creates such a disturbance."

The confusion subsided, and a tall, hatchet faced man, his homespun clothing nearly torn from his body, was led into the firelight by two husky Grenadiers. Snarling at his captors, who were gripping him cruelly, he called to the captain:

"These louts are twisting my arms off! Damn 'em! One would think I was making a mass attack on his Majesty's forces, single handed."

"A softer tone, sirrah, or I'll give you something worth troubling about. Release him. Now, what's your story?"

"I've quit playing a game, where I know I'm sure to be licked. General Greene is sick. Has a raging fever. Dr. Morgan, who's with him, says he must have a change of air at once."

"He'll get a change very shortly," grimly assured the captain. "Who succeeds him?"

"Old Put. When he picks up the reins I duck out."

"He means General Israel Putnam," murmured Bean.

"That places Putnam second-in-command?"

"It does."

Captain Melvin inquired of the Grenadiers as to where they had first seen the spy, or deserter.

"Coming down the road from New Utrecht," answered one of the men. "He had nothing to show he wasn't a rebel, sir."

"They didn't find me," exploded the man. "I was within a rod of their supper fire before any of them noticed me. I found them. I'm tired of worthless money, poor victuals and fighting a hopeless fight. I'm Timothy Orrs from the New Hampshire Grants."

"Search him!"

Inside of a minute the man's poor clothes had been thoroughly examined by fingers skilled in such work. Nothing of an incriminating nature was found. The captain turned to Bean and asked—

"Did you ever happen to see him before?"

"Not to recall him. Not being in the army, I scarcely would be apt to meet him. And that sharp face of his would be easily remembered. Many of them are deserting every day."

As he spoke he again felt an icy contraction of the heart. The deserter had darted a stabbing glance at him.

"I believe the fellow is telling the truth," decided the captain. "Only a crazy man would think he could stroll into the camp and leave with any worthwhile information. Sergeant, give him some food and a blanket."

To Orrs he said:

"You come here, unasked, my man. You will not attempt to leave. You are willing to serve as a soldier of his gracious Majesty?"

"I'd rather not do any soldiering," replied the deserter. "Means a rope if I'm caught. I'm fair sick and tired of starving, of carrying a gun with no powder or bullets to go along with it."

"Those who serve his Majesty live well with plenty of good food and something to wash it down. They have excellent arms and all the powder and lead they can use. We'll attend to you in the morning."

THE fellow glowered at the Grenadiers, who were now withdrawing, but when the captain turned his back, Bean was put on the alert by beholding the man's left eye close in a deliberate wink. The man sat down, his long arms dangling awkwardly between his knees, and stared gloomily at the ground.

Bean suggested to Captain Melvin—

"I might learn something from him as

to the situation in the Yankee camp."

"Most likely he knows nothing which we don't already know. But talk with him."

Bean shifted his position and began asking questions. The man answered, but appeared to be sullenly resentful because of the rough handling he had received.

"Look at what's left of my clothes," he complained. "Poor enough before I was manhandled, but they covered my nakedness. What do these folks think? That I'm fetching a fight to them?"

"You should have halted down the road and called for a guard to bring you in," said Bean.

The fellow's left eye for the second time closed slowly. Bean continued talking. The man maintained his listless attitude, but one long finger became idly active in making marks in the dirt. He listened and made brief answers. Bean talked on, but now had his gaze deflected, watching the slowly moving finger.

"We're licked and we know it," impatiently exclaimed the deserter.

Then he wearily repeated some of the many hardships the American soldier was enduring and, as he talked, Bean's widening gaze beheld letters forming in the sandy soil, until there emerged, *"Rod scaped"*.

Then a heel eliminated the message, and Bean knew that Washington had sent a volunteer to apprise him of his great danger. As if finding some solace in complaining, Orrs rambled on; and again the finger mechanically marked the ground. This second warning supplemented the first, and stated, *"Rod vs Hud in boat"*. And again the clumsily pawing hand erased what Bean was fearing was his own death warrant. Then the man threw himself on his side, pillowed his head on his arm and announced:

"I'm too tired to talk. I'll take the king's shilling. Give me a gun tomorrow and I'll fight my bigness."

Bean shifted back to his former position and told Captain Melvin:

"You doubtless caught all he said. He's willing to enlist. There are many who feel as he does and will do the same as he has done, if they get a chance."

"Yes. I heard it all. With new clothes and a good gun and plenty to eat, he will be another American volunteer to join our colors."

"Many will throw down their arms without firing a shot, once General Howe's advance lands at the Battery."

Captain Melvin smiled grimly.

"The rebels scarcely would tarry till we came that close. And our fleet can blow the town out of the water without sending a boat ashore."

"I fear I am not military minded. You must have had a rare training," said Bean.

"It's the A.B.C's of beleaguering a city to cut off all chances of a retreat by the enemy," the captain explained. "And we need New York for Winter quarters."

"Ah! Stupid that I am. Of course. That would mean King's Bridge is the stopper in the bottle. I know Manhattan well."

"You are guessing," curtly said the captain. "Only those on the general's staff know anything about his plans. Whatever he does will be most excellent. This accursed rebellion will be ended within the next thirty days. Then that planter from Virginia will meet with but small courtesy. The fashion of his meeting his come-uppance will be a warning for all the damnable black brood of traitors far down the years. Now let us try to sleep."

He ordered a batman to bring blankets, as they must lie on the ground; and after these were furnished Bean made a pretense of sleeping, with his leather box for a pillow. His mind was in a whirl, and far into the dark hours he was picturing his cousin crossing the Hudson in a boat, or making down the river to board the first enemy ship he came to. Less selfishly did he lament the sad intelligence of General Greene's sickness. The loss of his services was irreparable.

What sleep he secured that night was a fantasmagoria of horrid shapes, a dream interpretation of the Hessian mode of warfare and the accusing face of his cousin floating before him.

Mist lay heavily on the island when another day rolled in from the east for the profit or loss of the new republic. The mechanism of the huge camp began to function. Fires bloomed and kettles were set to cooking. Those with the least authority were the first to turn out. Not until after the sun had burned holes through the fog did the commander-in-chief come ashore where a gaily striped marquee awaited him.

Howe, ever under the influence of the sensual side of his nature, moved heavily as he stepped ashore. He displayed none of the incisive, sparkling qualities of a commander who is thoroughly in earnest. He was not quick in thought, and was ever restricted to wage war by rule. He detested all that might interfere with his physical comfort. Laziness, both mental and physical, was his greatest handicap. He was too indolent to save his prisoners from cruel abuse, but was not a merciless man.

He wished his soldiers to fare well, yet permitted them to be robbed by thieving contractors. Drinking, gambling and women were his chief amusements. Yet he was a brave man, in a dull, indifferent sort of way, and expected his officers to be fearless in battle, and was willing that they should be scandalously profligate when in quarters. He proceeded to his tent with scarcely a glance at the members of his staff. He resented the mists and the necessity of rising at such an early hour.

Enoch Smith was in the mess nearest the marquee and, after Captain Melvin went about his duties, he sauntered toward the big tent and curiously studied the Hessians, human cattle bought for so much per head. As Bean had hoped and expected, Smith was soon loitering close by, hungrily gnawing at a huge piece of salt beef. As if talking to himself he muttered—

"Nigh on to three days gone—but four weeks will never pass and find me alive."

From the corner of his mouth, and not looking at Smith, Bean warned:

"Be careful. Bad news. My cousin has escaped."

The salt meat fell to the ground. As Smith stooped to retrieve it he murmured in an agonized voice—

"Oh, my God!"

He might have betrayed himself to a ruinous extent had not Bean turned his back and appeared to be looking toward the heights of Brooklyn. Without changing his position he murmured—

"Word was brought by a make-believe deserter."

"Can't we run for it?" whispered Smith, his eyes staring at the piece of meat.

"When the troops advance, you disappear. Get to our lines. I must stay."

Smith assailed the meat in earnest and attempted no further speech. Bean sauntered about, keeping close to his leather box and the gay suit he did not believe he was destined to wear. He was quick to notice an orderly landing from the *Phœnix*, carrying what appeared to be a folio of maps under his arm. Bean sat down by his box. He was watching the activities of the various troops, admiring the technique which was skilfully evolving order from what had appeared to be chaos, when he was startled by a voice at his shoulder, saying:

"Mr. Rodney! Sir William's pleasure."

For an instant Bean forgot his assumed identity. His eyes were wide with apprehension.

"This way, sir," invited, or ordered, the officer. "Inside, sir."

Tremendously fearful for the next few minutes, Bean squared his shoulders and entered the marquee. Howe and some of his staff were examining a large map of Manhattan Island. The orderly announced Bean. Without looking up from the map General Howe curtly inquired—

"You are familiar with the East River shore?"

"Quite so, sir."

"This place. Kip's Bay. Any obstacles to a landing being made there?"

Bean glanced down at the map and promptly replied:

"None at all, sir. Excellent water, no rocks."

"That will do. You may retire." As he turned to make his exit Howe, speaking over his shoulder, told his staff, "That checks with what we already have learned. That is the place."

BEAN felt as if his blood were boiling. He was convinced that his face must be flaming as he stepped out into the sunlight. He feared that Captain Melvin, just hurrying back from some errand, would read his mind. He concealed his features for a bit by mopping his face with his handkerchief. But the captain did not appear to see him, as his errand was with headquarters. Bean aimlessly wandered about until he came upon Timothy Orrs, now clumsily wearing a uniform much too large for his thin figure. He caught the man's eye and walked aside. Orrs, still examining his musket, wandered close and complained—

"Don't believe this durned thing will shoot."

Bean took the piece and told him:

"The gun is all right. But it needs a new flint . . . Get back to New York. Tell headquarters that I say, 'Manhattan—Kip's Bay'."

"Can't make me believe any new flint will fix the danged thing."

"Manhattan—Kip's Bay."

"You, there! Long legs! Wake up and fall in with that squad," roughly ordered a drill sergeant.

Orrs sullenly obeyed.

Bean looked about for Enoch Smith, but that individual was not to be seen. He strolled around, but not too far from the spot where Smith would come to find him, did he secure an opportunity. Despite his nervous dread of discovery, he was impressed by the martial panorama spread out before him. From the fleet to far up the road leading to the east the uniforms of the different troops formed a brilliant spectacle. The air was filled with the roll of drums. There was no confusion. The accuracy with which the different parts of the huge machine meshed and functioned was high praise for England's drill sergeants.

Bean could not bring himself to wander from the shore, being convinced that fate would strike from across the river. For it was across the Hudson Rodney had "scaped" in a boat. His fiery disposition, and the resentment his brief captivity must have aroused, would spur him on to make every endeavor to join the invading army.

Once Bean's heart stood still, and he glanced about for some bit of seclusion where he might discard his boots and outer clothing and attempt to escape by swimming. But a second inspection of the man in the boat, now turning his head to gage his direction, revealed the comforting fact of a heavy black beard. The reaction left Bean so weak that he was glad to drop in a sitting posture close by his leather box.

A batman misunderstood and assured him:

"Yon box is safe, young sir. No one will touch it."

Next, Bean's attention was attracted to, and held by, a marching squad being drilled to move as one. It was composed of Tories from the island and New York. Enoch Smith was in the second four, staring straight ahead and carrying his piece like a wooden man. Bean knew his countryman was bedeviled by new fears. Smith met Bean's prying gaze, but he gave no sign of recognition. That day was one of constant apprehensions, and Bean was amazed to find night cloaking army and island with darkness, with no suspicions as yet directed against him. He was thankful for the darkness. A tent had been erected for Captain Melvin, and Bean was forced

to accept a courteous invitation to share its shelter. He would have preferred to remain outdoors, as even walls of canvas suggested a prison, a trap.

On the morning of the twenty-fourth, while striving to discover an excuse, or opportunity, for withdrawing from the muster field, he was accosted by Captain Melvin, whose eyes were flaming with anger. The captain's greeting consisted of the query, couched in bitterness—

"What do you think, sir?"

Instantly on his guard, Bean gaped and stared blankly. The question was for rhetorical effect, however, for the captain wrathfully continued—

"That damned American deserter, Orrs, has run away."

Bean frowned, then philosophically replied:

"If that be true, Captain, you are fortunate in not having him in your company. Some men are worthless to any cause."

"But I want him here," angrily retorted the officer. "Want the dog here long enough to fill a noose. He's vanished, uniform, gun and all. He's a damned spy!"

Bean wrinkled his brow, pursed his lips reflectively and slowly suggested:

"Isn't he just a damned coward? Isn't it better, if he was bound to run away, to do so before the battle rather than to set a bad example during the fighting? He didn't impress me as having brains enough to play the part of a spy. He can't have learned anything which the Yankees don't already know. Doubtless he deserves to be hanged by both armies."

"I've offered fifteen pounds for him alive. Five for him dead," said Melvin.

There came a new day, and Bean scarcely could make himself believe it was only August 25th. But each twenty-four hours doubled his fear of being confronted by his cousin. His mind was concerned with various schemes for escape. He had learned what Washington desired to know. He believed that Orrs would get through to New York. To be doubly sure of the important intelligence reaching the town, or Brooklyn, it was imperative that he desert the army and gain the American lines. Scheme as he would, however, he could find no opening.

At the shore, still watching for his cousin's coming, he met Tryon landing to stretch his legs and dine with the general staff. The former Governor spoke amiably to him and affectionately of Mr. and Mrs. Rodney. Before continuing on his way to Howe's marquee, he said—

"I believe I can assure you that you will be commissioned before we come to grips with the rebels."

Bean thanked him and watched him pass on. Then he resumed his watch for Enoch Smith, although now he doubted if it would be wisdom to instruct the man to desert before the battle opened. Orrs' departure caused him to fear such a move. One desertion would be accepted as ordinary; but did his companion vanish, he feared he would be in for a dangerous interview, that the finger of suspicion would be pointing to him, despite any support he might receive from Tryon. Each moment he was fearing a fatal repercussion from the marquee of the commander-in-chief.

Inaction was wearing his nerves ragged. He even fancied he was being watched. It was a positive relief when Captain Melvin found him and bruskly informed him:

"Mr. Rodney, you will march tomorrow evening, a brevet-major under Major-General Grant. You will receive the pay of a captain and act as such. General Grant will lead the 4th and 6th Brigades, the 42nd Regiment and two companies of stout loyalists. Your course will be along the coast road to Brooklyn."

"Excellent. Anything but this dull waiting. Shall I thank our commander-in-chief?"

"General Howe is very busy. Thank

him with service in behalf of his gracious Majesty's efforts to stifle this cursed rebellion. I will add, however, that it will be perfectly proper for you to express your appreciation to Governor Tryon, as it was he who spoke good words for you."

Never had Enoch Smith more anxiously counted the hours between him and his home-going, than did Bean in estimating the time before he could withdraw from the dangerous spot. A dozen times he beheld his cousin approaching. A dozen times his heart seemed to shrivel and stand still. Fortunately, for the little peace of mind he could enjoy, the enemy army, from General Howe down to the drill sergeants, was too busily engaged in preparing for the impending struggle to take notice of individuals.

In the early evening he found a way to cross Smith's path as the latter and a score of soldiers went swimming. On beholding Bean on the bank, Smith was the first ashore. While he was dressing in his new uniform Bean rapidly told him:

"Don't look at me. I'm marching over the Bay Road tomorrow evening in General Grant's division. After I've started, break away. Get into Brooklyn, or across to New York, and tell headquarters that I say it's 'Manhattan —Kip's Bay'. If you make Brooklyn say that Grant's thrust is meant only to distract attention from the real thrust from Bedford."

Without speaking, or even looking at his comrade, Bean hurried away. Then followed nerve racking hours, watching for the appearance of his cousin. Even when night came and the army was abed he remained awake, momentarily expecting to hear an outpost bringing in the genuine Cass Rodney. He slept but little, and when he did doze, it was to wake with a start, his ears ringing with false alarms. Had he believed he stood an even chance, he would have endeavored to gain the wooded hills and let the morning find him missing. For the first time he could sympathize, in a degree, with Enoch Smith's fear of war's cruel pranks, so often played upon those whose term of service was nearly ended.

He was awake and glad to leave his pallet with the first note of the reveille. Curiously enough, generations of respect for property prompted him to put on his best suit and pack the plain one to be left behind.

Captain Melvin eyed him with some surprise and remarked—

"You do yourself well, Major Rodney."

"I am dressing for a picnic," Bean defended.

"Damme pink and blue, but that's a good one. I admire your spirit, sir. Your excellent way of putting it shall be repeated."

The sun was ominously red in the hot haze of the morning. Drummer and fifer aroused the camp with staccato and shrilly piercing calls. Bean strolled about while a batman was preparing breakfast. He presented a gallant figure even among the rich uniforms of the officers. He composed his features, but he was convinced that fate was about to spring the trap; that his cousin would appear and reveal his duplicity before the last daylight hour could wheel into the dusk of evening. He tried not to think of it, fearing lest the very intensity of his apprehension cause his Tory cousin suddenly to materialize out of thin air. He endeavored to keep near the shore, and his gaze ever was seeking to find what he dreaded from over the water.

After he had shaved, using Captain Melvin's mirror, he was startled by his haggard appearance. The captain remarked—

"You look to be a bit off color."

Forcing his features to assume a smile, he replied:

"It's the deathly lassitude I ever experience in this muggy weather. I will feel more decent when I have something to do."

"Once you reach the enemy's works I

assure you that General Grant will keep you busy. And yet the movement in itself is a minor one, so far as action goes. You will simply divert the attention of the rebels from the more serious movement against their left flank."

"When do we start?"

"Nine o'clock. At the same time General Sir Henry Clinton, commanding the right, and General Lord Cornwallis, in command of the reserves, will advance from Flatlands to secure the pass near Bedford and turn the enemy's left flank."

"We'll give them a rare brush."

"There should be some entertainment in it," conceded the captain.

"Then we will fall on New York!"

"That may be expected. I give you good hunting."

"You have been most polite. I appreciate your courtesy, sir," said Bean.

With these amenities the two parted. That last period of waiting was chaos to Bean. He could not remember when he ate, or what he had eaten. He had spells when every man he met, even the stolid Hessians, seemed to be eyeing him curiously. It was with great difficulty that he managed to carry himself so as not to turn his disturbing notions into a grim reality.

GULLS soared high above the Narrows and with creaking cries swept down to feast on the refuse thrown from the ships. The day was close, with but little air stirring. Martinets, in correct military trappings, were red of face and irritable toward their inferiors.

After the shadows had thickened, a man came close to Bean, seized his hand and gripped it stoutly, then hastened away. Bean felt a choking in his throat: It was Enoch Smith's farewell.

Near nine o'clock there was a soft ruffling of drums, and the men quickly fell in. A colonel directed Bean to his position in the long line. Tory guides and scouts ranged ahead. But it was not until midnight that the long column with its ten pieces of sullenly clanking cannon got under way. Then did Bean draw his first free breath since undertaking the impersonation of his Tory cousin.

After advancing a considerable distance, Bean, with a thrill and a shudder, heard firing at the head of the column. He knew the head of Grant's division had come in contact with the advanced troops of his own army. Word was passed that the rebels were falling back, but in good order. After a short interval the firing increased. General Stirling with fifteen hundred men was opposing Grant's advance, by orders from General Putnam. As Grant's object was to hold the Americans' attention, he met the assault with but little spirit.

What Stirling could not know was that Sir Henry Clinton was within half a mile of the pass, which gave on to Bedford and the rear of the army. By daybreak Clinton's battalion of light infantry was proceeding, unopposed, through the pass and securing a position so commanding that the battle was actually won scarcely before a single shot was fired. Early in the morning Putnam knew of this advance, but gave Washington no notice of it. Nor did he order Stirling to retreat. To the contrary, when he learned his picket on the Bay Road had been driven in, he commanded Stirling to advance beyond the lines and "repulse the enemy", which was exposing the gallant soldier to face ten times his number. Grant's division alone outnumbered all Americans opposing it four to one.

On Stirling's right was Lord Howe's fleet in the bay, and five ships under Sir Peter Parker were sailing to menace New York. The American riflemen, thrown out as skirmishers, were driving back several times their number, and General Donop barely escaped a bullet. The so called battle consisted of a series of skirmishes.

The sun rose red and angry on the morning of August 27th. The wind, veering from the northward, stopped Parker from attacking New York.

Washington, relieved of this apprehension, crossed to Brooklyn and rode through the lines, witnessing the inevitable disaster brought about by lack of leadership.

Stirling was still holding out by reminding his men that Grant, in the House of Commons, had proclaimed all Americans to be cowards. After the fighting had ended on the American left and center, Stirling was still engaging desperately. Bean saw Captain Jewett, of Lyme, run through the body with the sword he had surrendered. Washington beheld Stirling's charge with five companies of Maryland men, an endeavor to gain time for the American troops falling back to the works. For gallantry and bravery it could not be surpassed. Cornwallis quailed before it and was about to give ground, when heavy reenforcements came up. Ten precious minutes were gained, and the Delaware and Maryland regiments were saved. Stirling refused to surrender his sword to any British general, but gave it to Heister.

It was at this dramatic moment that Bean glimpsed through the floating patches of smoke the infuriated visage of his cousin. He gained cover and made off in the direction of the works. Enoch Smith materialized out of the low hanging smoke and ran by him, crying—

"I've quit!" Then he noticed Bean was limping, and paused to ask, "What's the matter with your leg?"

Bean glanced down and was astounded to find his left shoe was full of blood from a wound he had not felt.

"Go on! Go on!" he cried. "Remember the message! Manhattan—Kip's Bay!"

Smith vanished. Bean limped into a bush growth. He believed his departure had escaped notice. He discarded his coat and waistcoat, as the heat was great in the thick cover. He was within half a pistol shot of the retiring Delaware men when a figure crashed toward him on his left. Cass Rodney at last had found him! He was carrying a broken gun barrel in one hand and a long pistol in the other; his face was filled with terrible anger.

"Damn you!" he panted, breathless from rage as much as from his physical exertions. "Damn you, trickster!"

Bean warded off the blow from the gun barrel and cried:

"I ran the risk of duty. Keep back, Cass! Killing one t'other won't help America—or England."

"You'll hang if I have to drag you back to the lines!" screamed the maddened youth. "You'll never deliver what secrets you learned!"

Bean said nothing, but fought only on the defensive—

"My gun's loaded," he warned.

"Then shoot it! Damned spy!"

"Never at you, Cass," Bean panted.

Springing back, he raised the gun and discharged it at the gathering clouds. As he fended off blows from the broken gun barrel he managed to say—

"I'll never be taken alive to fill a noose, Cass."

Panting and cursing, Rodney worked in vain to break through his cousin's guard and lay him senseless. Suddenly he halted, glared like a madman, threw up his pistol and fired.

"Oh!"

The exclamation was low, almost suggesting mild surprise. Bean staggered a step and fell.

Like one stunned, or awakening from a dream, Rodney stared down on the crumpled figure. His brows puckered, as if he could not understand what had happened. Then his sweaty hand clawed through his curly locks. He took a step forward and shuddered as he saw the dark brown stain spreading on the bosom of the white shirt. Suddenly he collapsed and cried out:

"Jim! Jim! You must come back! You're not bad hurt!" He shook the limp figure gently. "Jim! Jim!" he called. "I hated to do it! Do you hear me? I hated to do it—I didn't mean to do it, Jim. I was crazy!"

"So many feet! So many men—marching!" muttered Bean.

Again his cousin shook him; with his lips close to the dull ears, he cried:

"It's Cass talking. I hated to do it, Jim. Jim, I never really meant to do it! You hear me? Had to do it—my duty. Oh, Lord, why did I do it? Why did I do it!" And he fell across the inert body.

Bean opened his eyes and drew a shuddering breath.

"It's all right, Cass. Part of the bloody game we are in. Men coming—go!" Then he lost consciousness.

Cass Rodney heard it, a final mad sortie to beat back the overwhelming odds. Men were coming. With one last glance at the limp figure he hastened toward the British lines. The small band of retreating Americans all but trampled upon Bean before discovering him.

"My prisoner!" cried one.

"Your prisoner is a dead man. Come along!"

"He breathes. Help me tote him inside the works. He's dressed as gay as a macaroni. He's something to swap for the boys the red bellies have captured."

BEAN opened his eyes. After a bit of mental groping, he remembered his encounter with his cousin. He was conscious of a figure at the head of the bed, but was too weak to shift his gaze. He feebly asked—

"Have they taken the works?"

The tall figure moved into his line of vision and bowed over him. Bean feared he was delirious. The man, the apparition, was General Washington. The commander-in-chief answered his query, saying:

"The circumstances of our retreat, my lad, were particularly glorious to our army. Two men got through with your warning. One was the man who feared he would come to some hurt before his enlistment ended."

"Enoch Smith," mumbled Bean.

"He said he owed you for some rum; that he proposed paying the debt by enlisting for the length of the war."

"Our army, sir?"

"Retreating in good order. The Long Island trap didn't catch us. Every man was ferried across to New York. The enemy landed at Kip's Bay. We are evacuating Manhattan."

"Where am I?"

"You are in the Rodney home in Bloomingdale. My staff brought you here. I shall always remember the great risk you ran, the vitally important intelligence you obtained and the very desperate wound you received. Some officer must have shot you with a pistol. Do you remember?"

Bean's clan loyalty had weakened none. He answered:

"All mixed up. I felt a blow."

"Sleep. You soon will be well, I know." And the broad hand rested lightly on the young man's brow. "Rest. Come to me when you have recovered your strength. I shall not forget."

Then the tall figure left the room to join his staff, waiting below.

Another figure approached, slim and dainty. It was Lydia Rodney. She brought a cooling drink. He called her name. She told him—

"The man called Enoch Smith told me how you got your hurt, Jim."

"Fighting hard and falling back. Spent ball hit me."

"The breast of your fine coat was burned, Jim. Cass wrote me all about the terrible business. Sent the writing by one of our slaves he came across in New York. He's beside himself, Jim."

"Fair fight," muttered Bean. "I must dress and follow the army."

"Your General Washington holds us responsible for your recovery. As if we needed his warnings! Yet, should you die, it would be murder. So you must stay here and be quiet. You are perfectly safe. In the care of good stanch loyalists, with the British holding Manhattan. Jim, I like your General Washington . . . Now, please sleep."

Random Reminiscences of Africa

By TALBOT MUNDY

A JUNGLE SAGE

BWANA MAGANGA means master magician. It does not mean witch doctor, although this is how the words are usually translated. Almost every one who has traveled extensively in Africa has sensed, or even seen, glimpses of the native magic that persists, in spite of the rapid progress of civilization and the more or less persistent persecution of the so called "witch doctors" by those who believe it is their duty to stamp out their reputedly abominable arts.

It is, of course, true that native superstition very frequently encourages crafty but dangerously ignorant fakers to pretend to knowledge that they have not, and to misuse knowledge that they have. But that by no means covers the entire ground of native magic in Africa.

Very few white men, and particularly few missionaries, have had opportunity to study the subject at all, for the sufficient reason that the magicians regard all questioning as proof of enmity, and those who believe in them will tell any number of lies rather than betray them.

What actually first aroused my curiosity regarding African magicians was the information, given to me over the dinner table by a Christian bishop one night in Cape Town, that the original Hebrew text reads "woman of Endor" and not "witch of Endor." He added that the lady has been badly slandered, just as the African native magicians have been. So I began to make inquiries. But I was repeatedly assured

by doctors, missionaries and magistrates —in fact, by almost every one whom I asked—that all "witch doctors" are frauds who deal in nothing except lies and superstition.

However, I could find nobody who had ever seen one practising his alleged deceits, although I did find two in jail in Cape Town who had been sentenced, on the evidence of police spies and a missionary's servant, for practising medicine without a license. A note from Cecil Rhodes procured me admission to the jail, but no amount of questioning or bribery could induce either of those prisoners to talk; they were absolutely convinced that whatever they might say to any white man would be used against them.

Cecil Rhodes laughed when I asked him for his opinion.

"Go and find out for yourself," he suggested. "And when you know something, hold your tongue about it unless you like being called a liar."

Knowing he had trekked and camped all over the greater part of South Africa and Rhodesia and had lived in close contact with the Matabele and Basuto, I urged him at least to tell me some of his experiences with witch doctors. He filled his pipe and thought for a few minutes.

"No," he said. "You'd quote me. Go and find out. I did. There's something in it."

It was easy to find hearsay evidence, for and against. From end to end of Africa, wherever men are gathered together, there is always some one eager for an audience who remembers every wild tale he ever heard and tells them all as having happened to himself. It was easy to find medical men who grew indignant at the mere suggestion that there might be "something in it", as Rhodes had intimated; and it was almost equally easy to find overseers and ex-traders who would tell you they vastly preferred a witch doctor to a white physician, which sounded like nonsense, and probably was.

I could find neither native nor white man who could, or would, lead me to the heart of the matter, where I might study it at first hand. And before long it became quite obvious that the white men could not; the natives would not. It was a subject that no white man had investigated, for the simple reason that the native had learned what it costs him to tell what he knows and, consequently, shuts up like a clam when questioned. It was nearly a year before I had an experience that was so definite and intimately personal as to convince me, once and for all, that Cecil Rhodes was right.

AT A place called Chaichai, on the Limpopo River, in Gazaland, in what is known as Portuguese East Africa, I went down with East Coast fever, which is a very malignant form of malaria. The Portuguese official of a trading company most courteously lent me a bungalow to die in; it was near the wharf, at the pool where the coastwise trading steamers tie up—one of the very few places in the world where hippopotami, sharks and crocodiles infest the same section of river.

On Christmas morning the bi-weekly steamer brought the Portuguese doctor whose duty it was to tour the whole province and give medical advice. He advised me I should die the next day, borrowed some of my belongings and departed. However, he did me the kindness of kicking my servant, who tried to prevent him from opening my locked steel box; that made the servant, who was normally a rather sulky and unsympathetic negro, so indignant that he brought me my revolver. I was too weak to have used it, but the doctor was not feeling particularly brave. He left the bungalow with all the dignity he could muster and, turning in the doorway, assured my servant that he would charge him with having murdered me as soon as I was dead.

So I owe my life to that Portuguese

doctor, whose name was Leal; I sincerely hope he is alive and that he will read this acknowledgment of the service he quite unintentionally rendered.

Normally, such a threat would have terrified a native servant into precipitate flight. It was possibly intended to do that. When Samaki—the name means Fish—disappeared that evening I was half delirious and merely sufficiently conscious to miss him and to suppose he had run away for fear of being accused of causing my death. However, about midnight he returned and closed the windows.

At that time of the year, in Gazaland, it is furnace hot by day and the nights are intolerable. I called out to him that he was crazy, but he took no notice. He hung blankets over the windows. Then he lighted the lamp, stepped out on the veranda, closing the door behind him, and waited outside, tapping what sounded like a signal on the veranda floor boards. Samaki was not a boy whom I had come to trust as one does some natives, so I began to suspect he was signaling to accomplices, who were to come in and murder me with the idea of stealing my money and belongings ahead of the doctor, who had probably helped himself to many a dead man's valuables.

I was sure of it when Samaki came in presently, followed by a man and four women. However, I was too weak to protect myself. I tried to get off the bed, but Samaki thrust me back. When I tried to yell, he gagged me with the bed sheet. Then, seated on the edge of the bed, and still holding the sheet over my mouth, he spoke at last:

"This man heap good dok-i-tar. He dok-i-tar you. Then you no die. I have promise him you no tell. You tell, he get *sjambok*. You no tell. Say you no tell."

I suppose, if I had not been desperate and deathly ill, I might have objected. I may have been half out of my mind with fever and the torturing heat. But I very definitely did not wish to die in Gazaland, and I felt strangely encouraged by the air of mystery. I don't think I quite realized yet that the man whom Samaki had brought was one of the witch doctors whom I had sought for almost a year in vain. At any rate, I gave the required promise. Samaki pulled off the loincloth I was wearing because pajamas were too hot, and stepped aside to let the magician do his business.

He was a very ugly looking savage, and he stank. He wore nothing except a goatskin on his loins, a necklace of beads and lions' claws and some brass-wire armlets. He began to dance around and around the bed, humming to himself, and four women hummed what seemed to be the same tune, but I could hear no words. I have no idea how long he danced and hummed, because I presently lost consciousness.

The next thing I knew, I was lying face downward on the bed and being violently massaged by the four women. They had quantities of vile smelling greasy stuff, which they smeared on liberally and rubbed in until it seemed to burn like the stings of a million wasps. They rubbed interminably, until the agony of it made death seem desirable, but I was helpless to prevent them and could only groan useless protests.

Suddenly the magician gave an order and they turned me over. Without a moment's pause they began massaging the front half of me, including my face, while the magician kept up his humming and dancing around the bed and, now and then, I heard Samaki humming the same monotonous refrain. It was the most intolerable agony I ever endured for a considerable length of time. It felt like being burned alive, and bullied at the same time.

However, toward morning, just as daylight was beginning to show at the edge of the blankets hung over the windows, the pain ceased and was followed by a feeling of extreme comfort and relaxation. The magician gave an order; the women stopped their work, and

the magician came and stared at me. He gave another order and they sponged off the vile-smelling stuff they had spread all over me, but I fell asleep almost before they had finished doing it.

That was the last I ever saw of that particular magician. When I awoke, around noon, I had no noticeable fever but the stench in the room was unendurable, so Samaki carried first the cot and then me out to the veranda. By evening I had the beginnings of an appetite. By New Year's Day I was perfectly well and ate ceremonial breakfast with my Portuguese host and his friends under a huge baobab beside the pool where hippos, crocodiles and sharks foregathered. My host, who had returned that morning from a journey to a distant plantation, laughed when I spoke of the Portuguese doctor, about whom he gave the impression of knowing more than he cared to tell.

"You are lucky that he did not give you one of his injections," he assured me.

But he asked no questions as to how I had recovered so swiftly, and I was afraid to ask him any about the witch doctor, who might have been caught and severely punished, had any one present reported him for practising his arts.

However, I did try to reward the man. I sent Samaki with the equivalent of fifty dollars in English gold, but Samaki came back with the money, saying the magician would not accept it; so I sent Samaki to him again to ask what gift he wished, only to receive the answer that no gift would be acceptable.

"Only," said Samaki, "he is saying, you no tell about him. If you tell, he is saying, you get damn bad luck."

Thereafter I traveled on foot to Lake Nyassa, and thence to Lake Tanganyka; but although I made constant inquiries at every village, and was careful to avoid arousing the natives' suspicion but did, on the contrary, rather successfully win their confidence in many ways, I was unable to find a single witch doctor or to persuade any one to tell me anything whatever about them or their methods. The usual answer was, that such people belonged to days gone by and that there weren't any since the white folk had come and imposed new customs.

WHEN I did meet one at last, it was near Muanza, in what was then German East Africa. The government was military and extremely strict, involving the employment of numerous spies, so that nobody dared even to discuss unlawful practises, and when I mentioned the word *maganga* it would act like a gag to all further conversation. However, I became sick again, this time with what I suppose was some form of rheumatism.

I am almost totally ignorant of medicine and medical terms, so I may be mistaken as to the nature of the malady; what I can state on oath is, that my right knee swelled and was so painful that I could hardly bear to put my foot on the ground. Another symptom was irritability; I became so bad-tempered that I could hardly endure my own thoughts.

There was a German military doctor within fifty miles, but I could no longer walk; so I camped by the side of a small stream for several days, hoping to get better, but growing steadily worse, and making poor Samaki's life unendurable with bitter criticism, which I could no more avoid doing than I could stop the pain. I seemed to have utterly lost control of my temper. It was as if some one else were railing at Samaki. I had to sit in a long canvas chair, with my leg supported on cushions, and listen to him.

However, Samaki once more solved the problem; but this time he asked my permission to bring a *maganga*. Hardly waiting for the answer, he vanished; and about three in the afternoon—after an absence, that is, of five hours—he

returned with a tall, respectable looking individual who wore a tight cotton turban and a long smock. He was clean. There were traces of gray whiskers on his lean face. Apparently he spoke no language in which I could carry on a conversation; and he made no comment, merely looking at my knee as if its condition were hardly worth his troubling himself about. Without having said one word, he faced about and walked away.

I did not see him again until the following afternoon, by which time he returned with the same casually indifferent air but with a cotton umbrella tucked under his arm and a small wooden box in his right hand. It was the sort of box, with a sliding lid, in which jewelers send watches through the mail. He said nothing whatever to me, but spoke to Samaki, who removed the loose covering from my knee; and my whole tribe of porters—about thirty of them, including the cook—gathered around the door of the tent to see what would happen.

For a few moments very little did happen. The man merely shook the small box and held it to his ear. Then he held it, lid downward, as close to my knee as he could without actually touching the skin. Suddenly he drew the lid —and jumped backward. I jumped, too. I almost went through the roof of the tent, swearing like a madman. He had wild bees inside the box, and it felt as if about ten million of them stung me. There were probably only fifty or sixty bees, but they were enough to make me forget the rheumatism, to sting Samaki and the *maganga* himself in two or three places, and to scatter my porters all over the lot.

I daresay I was the maddest white man that *maganga* had ever seen, but he merely shrugged his shoulders, made a *sotto voce* remark to Samaki, and walked away.

I don't remember how long it was before the pain altogether left me, but it was not more than a few hours. By bedtime I was comfortable and, if memory serves, the swelling had disappeared. By the following morning I was fit to march. Before I broke camp the *maganga* came again to see me and I offered him money, which he refused.

Pressed to say what present he would like, he selected a photograph of my sister, which he had seen on the camp table beside the bed; but I haven't the slightest notion why he chose it, or what he did with it; he may have supposed the silver frame was worth a lot of money; or perhaps he thought my sister was a priestess of some occult order, because she had been photographed in her wedding dress, with an old-fashioned veil and quantities of flowers.

Several physicians, to whom I have told this story, have flatly refused to believe a word of it, that being, of course, by far the simplest way of rejecting the suggestion that a black magician could possibly know more than they do along certain lines of knowledge. However, Dr. Atcheson, who is one of the best known dentists in California, and who has kept bees for at least thirty years, has told me that few bee keepers ever have rheumatism because they are constantly getting stung and the poison of the bees' sting is a preventive, at any rate, of some sorts of rheumatism. Other bee keepers have told me the same thing, but I have met one or two who denied it, although those also admitted that they have never suffered from the complaint that bee poison is supposed to be able to prevent and cure.

The next time I met a *maganga* was about three months later, at Kurungu, about twenty miles north of the British-German boundary line. Samaki had died, of what he said was snake bite, but what I believe was the bite of a purple spider. A *maganga,* summoned in haste from a distance by one of the porters, came only in time to assist at the funeral. He was a miserable looking savage, half starved and almost naked, as well as dog tired from his long march. So I gave him a blanket and

lent him a cotton tent to sleep in, telling some of the porters to tie the ridge rope between two trees. However, the rope was not quite long enough to pass around the trunks of the two closest trees, so I took two long nails and a hammer from the lock box of assorted odds and ends that most men carry with them on safari. Starting to drive a nail into the nearest tree, I missed it and struck the dark green bark, which turned out to be soft and exuded a sticky white sap. Some of the sap squirted into my right eye, and I believed I was blinded. I could no longer see through that eye and the pain was agonizing. However, the *maganga* knew instantly what to do.

His relief took a mere matter of seconds and there were no ill after-effects.

AT LEAST a year passed after that, before I found a *maganga* at last who made no secret of his profession. His name, as nearly as I can spell it, was Oketch. He was a member of the Kakkamegga Kavirondo tribe, who live a few miles north of the equator, within sight of the slopes of Mount Elgon. He was an enormous man, over seven feet tall, and so old that I refuse even to try to estimate his age. His neighbors said of him that he was over three hundred years old, but that means nothing in a land where a seventeen-year-old will say he is seventy, and a seventy-year-old will say he is seventeen.

For good measure, they added that his father, who had died when he was young, was four hundred years old, and that his grandfather went back to the beginning of the world. Oketch looked old enough to have been his own grandfather; however, his magnificent teeth were all in place, his sense of humor was intact, and he had not lost the strength of his fingers, as he proved by extracting an abscessed molar for me, by simply twisting it out, without the aid of any implement whatever. The worst part of the experience was having my mouth forced open by his left hand while he inserted his bony and decidedly smelly right thumb and forefinger. The extraction was not particularly painful and was over in a second. He was hugely amused by my using a mouth wash afterward to guard against infection. When I offered him some he drank quite a lot of it.

He was a rain maker. That is to say, he was an aristocrat, rating far higher than the mere practitioner of occult healing arts; and he was not of Bantu, but of Nilotic origin, speaking a difficult language in no way related to the Bantu-Kavirondo of the neighboring tribes. The shape of his skull, and in fact his whole appearance, except for his great height, suggested that of the Pharaoh Rameses. Mere chiefs and headmen treated him with profound respect, and the fact that he and I were on very friendly terms stood both him and me in good stead later on, after I had become a government official.

We became friends in probably the only way that could have happened, since his opinion of white men in general was not high and he deeply resented both the encroachment of the missionaries, whom he called trouble makers, and the imposition of new customs which he thought indecent and unsuitable. His own tribe so resented the new order of things, although as yet it had hardly touched them, that they committed suicide in dozens by throwing themselves over a high cliff.

One day, on the northern slope of Mount Elgon, a charging elephant—a rogue that had destroyed two native villages and ruined their standing corn—was stopped by my fourth bullet and fell dead on top of me, smashing my right shoulder and collar bone along with several ribs. There was no European doctor within a hundred miles, so my porters carried me on an oxhide to Oketch and pitched camp within fifty feet of his grass thatched hut.

The old rain maker took charge of me without any bargain or argument and

began by reducing the fever; he accomplished that by keeping a string of women busy (most of them were his wives, and they ranged from sixteen years of age to sixty). The women soaked my bed sheets and all the trade calico I had in clean, cool water, and in those I was kept covered from head to foot. The moment the sheets became warm from the heat of my body they were replaced with fresh ones and thoroughly rinsed in a nearby stream, to get what Oketch called the bad magic out of them. I suppose he meant the poison caused by fever, but, since he overcame the fever very swiftly, I don't see that it makes much difference what he called it.

When the fever was under control, he set the bones; and, so far as I could make out, he set them chiefly by touching this nerve and that with his exploring fingers until the muscles drew the bones into place, but the pain for awhile was so intense that I can't claim to have observed what he was doing. When I writhed, instead of holding me he made the women massage my legs and the uninjured parts of my body; and when the bones were set to his satisfaction he himself worked over various muscles for a long time, manipulating them with his fingers.

He used no bandages or splints of any kind, but tied me so that I could not move; and he set women in relays, not only to keep constantly changing and rinsing the wetted sheets, but to prod me with a sharp stick if I even looked like moving. Four or five times a day, and four or five times a night, he came and felt my muscles with his long, strong fingers, whose touch, although it sometimes hurt a bit, felt magically soothing.

I don't know how long I lay there. It was probably ten days before he let me sit up with assistance and lie propped on pillows; it may have been longer. I think it was a month or five weeks before he would let me use my right arm, though almost from the first he had encouraged me to use the fingers of my right hand by drumming them on the mattress. Reflecting about it afterward, and trying to remember all the details, it seemed to me that he had kept me consciously and constantly occupied during every waking moment—occupied, that is, in working with him rather than against him.

He certainly established confidence from the moment he controlled the fever, and at no time did he appear to be puzzled, in doubt, or anything except sure of his skill, of his method, and of the outcome. It is almost impossible nowadays to find the places where my ribs and collar-bone were broken; and although my right shoulder dislocates rather easily, and there appears to be a slight shortening of one of the ligaments, X-ray examinations made by surgeons who have had to re-set the shoulder on occasions when too much violence has thrown it out of joint, reveal that Oketch did a marvelous job.

Some people object to the word magic. I don't. I like to think of him as a magician, just as I like to think of the lady of Endor as a great high priestess.

Magic, after all, whether or not superstition causes one to resent the word, is relative to the ignorance of the individual confronted by it. It might be described as a divinely simple means of doing what is normally done by complicated effort. My gold watch that I gave to Oketch was as magical to him as his surgery was to me, and he broke it in no time trying to find out why the wheels went round.

Ordinary mechanics were outside the sphere of his knowledge, but, as far as I could make out from conversation with him, he was no more a believer in the supernatural than I am. He believed in keeping secret what he knew for two reasons, both of which he admitted quite frankly. The first was, that it is next to impossible to tell what one knows because there are no words in which to tell it; and any modern scientist who has tried to explain his magic to a layman; or any college professor, or any poet, or painter, or musician will

readily sympathize with that view.

But the second reason had, I think, at least equal weight. Well kept secrets are the very foundation of power over other people. The man who blabs all he knows deprives himself of his only particular value; his magic becomes commonplace. And while it may be the highest sort of altruism to make public one's most profitable secrets, there is still something to be said in favor of letting charity commence at home.

MORE than a year later I had ample opportunity to witness magic made by my friend Oketch. In my mind there is not one trace of doubt that he did it, although I don't pretend to have the slightest notion how he did it. I utterly disbelieve in the supernatural, being convinced that natural laws pervade and govern the whole universe; but it is perfectly evident that some men know more of the laws than others do, and those men can work what look like miracles to the ignorant observer. It is equally evident that some men, who know most about some laws, know least about others. Oketch, for instance, could neither read nor write; and to save his life he could not have explained the mechanism of a watch. He was baffled by smallpox, and he had no use for missionaries, or for the theory that what they want is always good for people. But he could set bones; and he could make rain.

There came a famine on that countryside, caused by prolonged drought. Famine brought various plagues in its wake, as well as discontent that, from the native angle, was not unjustified. The white man's government, that had imposed all sorts of restrictions, had made no provision for supplying dire need that was, at least in part, the white man's fault.

There were minor rebellions here and there and the short handed white officials were overworked to the verge of near insanity, as well as faced by problems that very few of us were qualified by experience to handle. Rumor trod on rumor's heels, and every trader, every missionary turned alarmist, bringing in, or sending in incredible stories that they, nevertheless, believed implicitly.

One of the wildest tales was to the effect that Oketch, the notorious rain maker, had been petitioned by the tribes to make rain, but had demanded great gifts of cattle before he would go to work. When no rain came, he had demanded more cattle—and again more cattle, until at last he owned enormous herds and there were no cattle left in the famine area. The missionaries, of course, were bitterly opposed to all witch doctors, that being the misnomer by which they usually classified all native practitioners of reputedly occult arts; and they chose that opportunity to make a concerted attack on *magangas* in general, with Oketch as the first objective because his repute was the most outrageously offensive.

The truth about the cattle situation was that there was no longer anything on the plains, or on the lower slopes of the hills, for the cattle to eat. So their owners had sent them away to the highlands, where there was still good grazing, to be cared for by the tribes more fortunately situated and who did, undoubtedly, drive stiff bargains for a percentage of the cattle, of which percentage Oketch received his reasonable share. But the truth is sometimes very unconvincing when told by a tired, exasperated and possibly tactless individual to men who have constituted themselves witness, judge and jury and, convinced they can not be mistaken, have already delivered their verdict. I protested—a bit explosively, I don't doubt—and flatly refused to do anything.

Complaint was promptly made, over my head, to the governor in Nairobi, who was probably just at that time the most worried and harassed official between the Cape and Cairo. The governor commanded me, by telegram, to go

and arrest the rain maker who was reliably reported to be making all the trouble.

Orders are orders. And the missionaries knew I had received the order. In other words, they had scored; and it was only human nature to be rather cock-a-hoop about it. They are seldom uncommunicative people, and in next to no time it was all over that countryside that Oketch was to be arrested; with the immediate result that when I went to select the eight native policemen who were to accompany me on the expedition, I found them terrified. They had no ambition whatever to interfere with the great *maganga*. They were lame. They had sore throats. Their mothers were dying. They had bellyaches. Their leave was overdue. They offered every imaginable argument short of actual mutiny.

They were the dregs of the local contingent, malingerers and loafers to a man, left in charge of an Indian noncom who was too loyal to go into the hospital, where he rightly should have been. Every policeman worth his salt had been drafted into one or other of the scattered complements that were engaged in minor warfare in outlying districts. So there was nothing to do but to choose those who seemed the least likely to run away.

I ordered them to pack up for an eight-day march, and to bring their Martini rifles, but no ammunition, it being rule number one of the game of playing with danger, that a scared man with a deadly weapon in his hands will start something as surely as some one else will have to finish it. Then we set forth, with four good porters to carry loads, and my servant to cook for the crowd.

It was nominally four long days' march, but we made it in three, to the foot of the high escarpment, on the summit of which was the village in which Oketch had lived for more years than he or any other person could remember. I had hoped to arrive ahead of rumor; but rumor had gone on lightning wings, and not only that village was interested; the fighting men from five or six more villages had come to protect the *maganga*, and if one could judge by the drumming and yells they were ready to fight to the death.

The only feasible approach to the village, without making a circuit of almost a day's march, was by a zigzag footpath up the face of the escarpment. At the top was a V-shaped gap, and they were mustered in that gap in great numbers, armed with spears and shields. However, experience is a fairly good guide in such matters, and I knew that natives of that part of Africa, if they really mean resistance, almost never form up in the open but rely on surprise attack, frequently by night or, by daylight, attack on the flank from long grass. They are also exceedingly chary at all times of attacking a white official. And furthermore, I counted on the friendship of Oketch, who probably had heard I was coming, and who would be very unlikely to allow me to be killed. So I decided to advance.

However, the policemen were so scared that I had to kick them up the hill. If they had had shells for their rifles they would probably have shot me, they were so terrified; and the worst part of the whole business was getting them to climb that zigzag footpath in the face of the yells, threats and abuse from the actually harmless spearmen at the top of the hill. A few thrown spears, that were undoubtedly intended to fall short, added to their terror, and I believe they never would have climbed to the top if it had not been for my servant Ngozi, who brought up the rear with the porters and cut off retreat. Ngozi's jibes and threats were even more distressing than the demonstration at the hilltop.

As anticipated, when we reached the notch the defenders retired in front of us, going through all the noise and motions of a desperate hand to hand battle. But it was like a battle on the grand

opera stage. Its gestures were traditional. It had been rehearsed. It might have seemed extremely frightful to any one of a nervous temperament, and it would probably have been easy, by betraying fear, or by making a counter-demonstration, to convert it into a genuine shambles. The trick was to understand that they were merely registering protest in their own way, and to be nonchalant, like the man in the advertisement, but at the same time obstinately forthright. True to the tradition of the Briton, whose nerves are not so nicely balanced as they seem, I lighted a cigaret and walked straight forward.

I knew where the rain maker's hut was. Presently I saw him on his hands and knees, peering through the low entrance. I went up and sat by the hut until he crawled out to talk to me. And when the embattled tribesmen saw that happen, they retired into the long grass to hold a *shauri*—in other words, to discuss what to do next until it was too late to do anything at all.

I told Oketch why I had come, and I showed him the governor's telegram. Not that he could read it, but it looked important and added weight to what I had to say. I explained that he must come with me; that I could not help that; but that he should be offered no indignity and that I would befriend him in every possible way throughout the subsequent proceedings.

He retorted by offering me my pick of all his cattle, and as many of them as I pleased, if I would go away without him. About ten minutes were used up explaining to him what he already knew perfectly well, that government officials were not allowed to accept presents of any kind. At last he made me an astonishing proposal.

"White man, go away, and I will make the rain come."

I took a long look at the sky. It had not rained for nearly a year and there was no sign of rain—no clouds—not a symptom. The sky was almost like the inside of a brass bowl, it was so bone dry and unpromising. The only thing in sight that even remotely resembled a cloud was the smoke from the parched jungles and hillsides that had caught fire as a result of the long drought.

Since he seemed to be as obviously bluffing as his spearmen friends had been, I cut the conversation short by ordering my men to make a hammock out of blankets and a long pole, and to place him in it. He submitted, and we started the long march homeward, eight policemen carrying him in deathly fear of his magic, and his tribesmen watching us through the long grass like monkeys, as frightened as they were curious. To them, the loss of their *maganga* was a bewildering and almost catastrophic mystery.

I had ordered the policemen not to halt until they reached the foot of the escarpment. However, when the *maganga* ordered them to halt, they halted, in the throat of the notch, and one of them came running back to me with a message that the *bwana maganga* wished to speak to me. When I came alongside the hammock, he asked me—

"White man, if I make the rain come, will you go away and leave me?"

Not wishing to be caught there in the notch by a surprise attack from the rear, I swore at the policemen for having halted without my permission, and threatened all sorts of dire penalties if they should dare to halt again before we reached the bottom of the foot path; and downward we went. However, halfway down, he halted them again, although no policemen dared to carry back a message; they merely waited for me to overtake them. This time Oketch was nervously insistent—

"White man, I will make the rain come if you let me go back."

There was time now—no sign of pursuit. I could afford to be patient and to try to study out the old man's motive in making such an improbable boast. So instead of answering him at once I lighted a cigaret and took a good

stare at the sky.

I remember I thought of the Bible story of Elisha and the "cloud like a man's hand". Oketch might have noticed a small cloud which, experience might tell him, would develop rapidly. But there was no cloud. There was neither sight, nor feel, nor smell of moisture on the whole horizon. It seemed obvious enough that the embarrassing turn of events had unhinged the old *maganga's* reason, temporarily at any rate; so, instead of arguing with him I repeated my promise that he should receive the best possible treatment, and we resumed the march downhill.

When we reached the foot of the escarpment the policemen were entitled to rest, so they lowered their heavy burden and Oketch took a seat on a rock. Not wishing to get into an argument with him, I kept my distance; but, still puzzling over the old man's offer to make rain, I summoned Ngozi, who had extraordinarily keen eyes, and asked whether he could see any traces of cloud in the sky. He could see none, although he stared for several minutes.

"But," he said, "if you want rain, *bwana*, beat that old *maganga* and he will make it quick."

I was about to call out to the policemen to resume the march when one of them came hurrying to say that Oketch wished to speak to me. I strolled over and sat down beside the old man, offering him a cigaret, which he refused, and candy, which he accepted.

"White man," he said, "I will make the rain come. Then you let me go."

It was on the tip of my tongue to agree to that. I thought it might be interesting to see him try to work his magic, which I felt quite sure must fail, because the sky was as dry as ever, and his failure might make it seem more reasonable to him that I should carry him off to Kisumu. Fortunately, a distaste for making a man who had been my benefactor, and who was accustomed to dignity, appear ridiculous, stopped me in time. The policemen raised the hammock; I helped him into it, and we resumed the march.

Within ten minutes it was raining as I have never seen it rain, before or since. The sky clouded over suddenly, and the rain burst with thunder and lightning and a great gust of strong wind. We were drenched in a moment. For awhile, so strong was the wind that it was difficult to force our way against it. It became almost as dark as night, such black clouds blotted out the sun. The rain beat up knee high from the dry earth; and within very few minutes there came a galloping surge from the hills on our left hand as the rivulets gathered in streams too swiftly for the earth to drink them up and cataracts came seething down every watercourse and gully. I overtook the hammock to see what I could do to cover the old man.

"There," he said. "I made rain. Let me go now."

It did not cease raining for three days. We made the four days' march in two, struggling through deep mud, and impressing wayside natives to relieve the police with the load for short distances, in order not to be marooned by the rising streams and rivers. Even so, we were nearly drowned as we crossed the Yala River, which is normally a placid stream not more than waist deep; and all of us, except the old *maganga*, were more dead than alive when at last we reached Kisumu and heard the welcome cannonade of rain on corrugated iron roofs. Oketch lay at his ease in the hammock and seemed thoroughly to enjoy his victory.

I lodged him in the jail, where he had the time of his life. He had a comfortable mat to sleep on, three good meals a day, and the profound respect of all the prisoners, who washed his feet, fussed over him and treated him with almost abject reverence. Even the Goanese jailer seemed afraid of him. Even the Sikh and Punjabi prisoners addressed him as *bwana*. I believe he would have been perfectly satisfied to

stay in the jail for the rest of his life.

But of course there was no excuse for holding him. His arrest was a gross injustice and discreditable to all concerned, except to Oketch himself. There were formalities. My report had to go to the governor, and there were several days' delay before the order came for his release; but that gave time to rig a comfortable chair on poles in which to send him back to his home in the hills with becoming dignity.

Before he left, smoking a long iron stemmed pipe filled with sulphurous smelling tobacco, in his chair under a bright red blanket awning, borne on the shoulders of porters, I ascertained that the only grudge he bore against me was that the gold watch I had once given him would not go. He could not have told the time by it, but he wanted it to go. I had sent it to India once, to have it mended for him; but the glass was smashed again, one hand had come off, and the mainspring was apparently broken.

"Is all white man's magic like that?" he asked me.

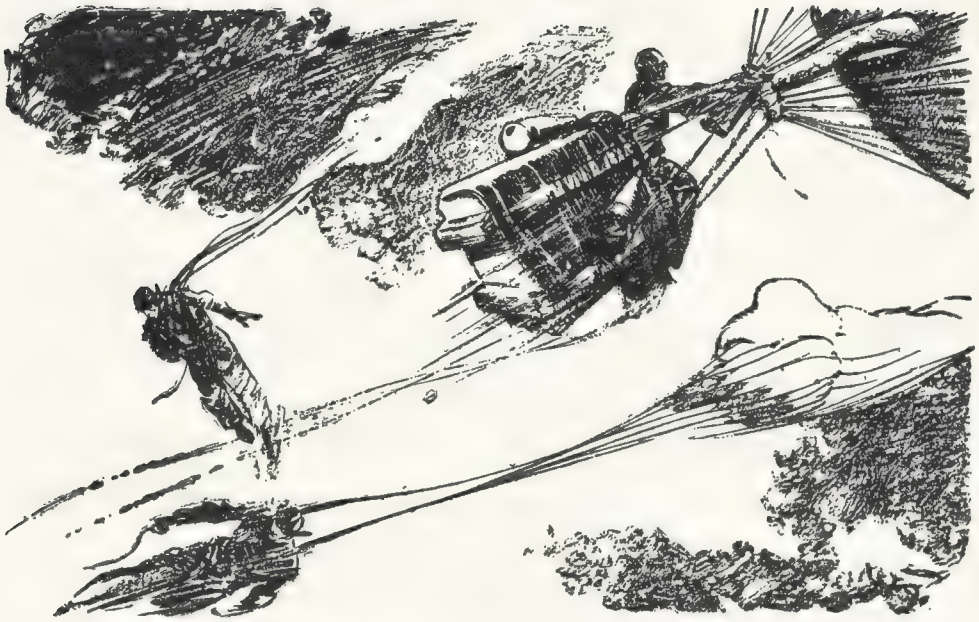
NIGHT SHIFT

By Harry Kemp

THE day was drab, and darkness settled down
On gutted hill, on smoke enveloped town.

The clean-up men, the stove gangs, in a long
Processional that moved to Iron's song,
Past sheet iron shanties, through the dripping murk,
Went traipsing with their shiny pails to work:
The men who labor in the booming mill,
And those who guide the black electric crane
And shift the levers with deft, delicate skill . . .

While hungry ladles lipped their crimson fill
Till gouted lightnings bickered back again
With hissing fire and flushed, coruscant spark,
The reddening, thunder throated mills resumed
Their effort, and the night was reillumed
Where Bessemer converters plumed the dark.



ADRIFT

By LELAND S. JAMIESON

THIRTY minutes before a thin gray light began to dissipate the darkness of the Hawaiian dawn, two lieutenants of the Air Service left their bachelor quarters and trudged sleepily through the Post toward the bedding ground of their balloon. Baucompe, a first lieutenant, his red hair uncovered to the chill, damp air, walked silently ahead, still bearing some vague traces of a hangover from the night before. He was in a black mood, his nerves on edge. He dreaded the observation of artillery fire he would be engaged in until noon. A short sleep had not rested him, and he was tired.

Jones, the shavetail, followed Baucompe at a pace or two. He was six feet one, broad and thick, a fine, bulking figure; and even though they walked uphill, he looked down easily on Baucompe's ruffled hair.

Jones, too, for a time was silent. Usually on these morning walks to work he kept up a constant running discussion of the general's daughter or the fifth chukker of yesterday's polo game, or the sore belly he had received at Waikiki last night from falling off a surf board eleven times. Out of the Point two years ago, and then immediately through balloon school, Hawaiian foreign service attached to the Coast Artillery hadn't rubbed him raw as it had Baucompe. His viewpoint was still flexible and tolerant. He'd had a year of this tour now. His superior had had three.

"Bo, you're a fool," Jones said at last. "You'd have smacked him if I hadn't grabbed your arm. Man, you don't want to go around hitting majors, I'm telling you. Especially majors of the Coast Artillery."

Baucompe grunted and shrugged. He walked on, saying nothing, then pres-

ently dropped his stride and fell in step beside the bigger man.

"If I don't get off this tour of duty pretty soon, I will hit him!" he declared, and laughed grimly. "Then it'll be a court for me, and six years' service gone to hell."

Jones laid a huge hand on Baucompe's shoulder.

"You got plastered last night. Remember? Remember what he said about the Sixty-Third Article of War? He may even try to put skids under you, too. You talked pretty hard-boiled —wanted a court of inquiry—said he'd been an underhanded so-and-so for three years trying to get you into trouble. You invited him to go up with us this morning and said he was the son of a good many things if he didn't have the nerve to go."

"He'll never show up," Baucompe predicted. He ran his fingers through his hair. "Why, that dirty, white livered wart on a pig's ear! I'll meet him out of uniform some day back in the States—"

Jones laughed cheerfully. He liked Baucompe, and he didn't dislike Major Rooney. But while he was tolerantly amused by their deep seated aversion for each other, he wanted Baucompe to keep out of trouble.

"You don't remember trying to hit him with that chair last night, I suppose?"

"Chair? The truth is," Baucompe admitted somewhat reluctantly, "I don't. But any man should know better than to put out such an idiotic order —and especially to come to my quarters to give it to me personally. Bad enough to have to get it through channels."

"Everything would have been all right if you hadn't forced him to bet that you couldn't drink him under the table. He wasn't nasty when he got there. But as soon as he came in you told him no officer and gentleman would leave a place without accepting a drink. Well, you can't blame him for taking it—and you made it plenty big. That started the party."

"Chair, eh?" the first lieutenant mused, suddenly worried. His dislike for Rooney flared. He said, "Should have hit him with it," and was distinctly glad he had not. He fished through his pockets and produced a typed letter, looked at it for some time in the dim light, then added, "Listen to this, Jones. This is a magnificent display of brains!" And he read, " 'In the future lighter-than-air craft will not be put through aerobatical maneuvers at altitudes lower than three thousand feet over cities or other inhabited areas.' Haw, aerobatical maneuvers in a captive balloon! Damn him! 'Signed, Will R. Rooney, Major, C.A.C. By command of Brigadier General Webb.' "

"Well," Jones defended, "he didn't know any better. If you'd let me handle him he'd have been all right."

"Didn't I try to explain?" Baucompe asked hotly. "Didn't I try to tell him?"

"Sure," Jones replied. "You were about as diplomatic as a steam roller. It was one drunk against another. I never had so much fun in my life, listening to you, not even that time I went swimming with the deb from Charleston and she lost her bathing suit." He added, very soberly, "I hope you don't get into any more trouble with him, Bo. Whether you like him or not, you've got to hand it to him for being capable in his own line. He's a good exec. He's entitled to respect."

"It's always the same," Baucompe sighed. " These Coast Artillery mugs must think a balloon runs on a track. Rooney saw us being hauled down yesterday at noon when the wind was making that rubber cow buck like a bronc on a skating rink, and what does he think? He thinks I'm doing it on purpose, for the kick I get. Thinks I'm deliberately *stunting* a captive balloon. So out he comes with an order to stop the fun he thinks I'm having. And adds insult to injury by bringing it up to me so I'd be sure to get it before we went

out this morning! If I hadn't known him for three years and hated him from the beginning, I wouldn't mind."

"Yeah, but that doesn't give you rank enough to hit him with a chair, Bo. I'm trying to keep you out of trouble, that's all. I haven't anything against Rooney. He's not a bad egg."

"Didn't he have something he was going to throw at me?" Baucompe asked, trying hard to remember.

"Well," Jones admitted, grinning, "after the talking got loud and rough, he did keep a pretty big vase in one hand. But he's a major, Bo, and he ranks you so—"

"Aw, shut up! I've known he was a major for three years. I wish he were in hell!"

THEY walked on in sudden silence, topped a rise and saw the dark, elephantine shape of the balloon where it squatted, tugging at the shrouds that held it to the ground. A dank, wet blanket of chilled air swept in from the sea and touched them here, and they hunched their shoulders tighter in their leather jackets and started down the hill.

The gray in the east had turned slowly to a cloud streaked scarlet, bringing light. The clinking of a mechanic's wrench on the winch motor floated up from the low ground near the gas filled bag. The great hulk swayed gently in the morning breeze, tossed its ugly nose in sullen, awkward movements, so that the dew on its great back glistened and then turned dark again repeatedly.

As the two officers approached, the winch motor barked a fitful staccato, rose in a steady gust of bedlam and then subsided to a throttled mutter. A dozen men, directed by a sergeant, scurried about their tasks of preparing the big balloon for its ascent. They untied bag after bag of sand from the lanyards that extended upward and leeched themselves to the black, damp belly of the craft.

Baucompe took charge, standing at one side and watching the operations with a practised eye, while Jones clambered into the wicker basket and arranged there the equipment they would use when in the air. But Baucompe, while giving occasional curt and sullen orders to his men, was thinking of other things.

His bitterness toward Rooney was intense. He loathed the man with that hardbitten dislike which only a junior officer can know for a superior. He had been, for three years, unable to escape the major's discipline, his brusk, unrelenting efficiency, his dogmatic but not intolerant ideas of the purpose of Air Service. A week after Baucompe reported in for duty, these two had had a clash. Rooney was from the Point and Baucompe was commissioned from the National Guard as an emergency officer in 1917. This alone formed the basis for a mutual antagonism; the old school man against the new.

And yet, the foundation for three years of trouble had been quite small in the beginning. Rooney had ordered Baucompe to go aloft for gunnery observation on a windy day, and the lieutenant protested that with his then untrained ground crew and the roughness of the weather the balloon would be wrecked; he eventually refused to go. Rooney could see nothing difficult in getting up, and Baucompe finally said, in the heat of youthful anger:

"Go ahead and fly the damn thing, if you know all about it. I'd like to see how quick you break your neck!"

And Major W. R. Rooney, with that cold, aloof dignity that made Baucompe both respect and hate him, had replied:

"Some day I'll have your bars, Lieutenant. The Service is full of men like you, and there isn't room for them. Incompetence can't be justified or tolerated."

"Incompetence!" Baucompe cried. "So I'm incompetent! I'll show you whether I'm incompetent, or afraid to fly that rubber cow. If you've got nerve

enough to come I'll take you for a ride you won't forget!"

Rooney smiled. He knew Baucompe would think he was afraid to go, and it must be said that he was strong enough to let the other go on thinking so unchallenged.

"I'm handling the battery today. I've got to stay down, as you well know."

"Get relief," Baucompe snapped. "I'll show you some things you don't know about balloons."

But Rooney did not get relief. He went so far as to bring the matter to the commandant's attention, and the result was that Baucompe flew, and flew alone. His offer to fly with Rooney, the general said, was proof enough that the condition was entirely flyable; and so Baucompe flew. From that day hence Rooney was the focus of all things unspeakable in Baucompe's mind. However, he did speak of them, and often.

Rooney's person had, until last night, remained as untouchable as smoke. The struggle had suddenly become strongly vocal and almost physical, and Baucompe knew that this would certainly lead to complications. So now, while Jones was busy in the basket of the sausage, Baucompe was engaged in contemplating the penalties of insubordination and other things equally ruinous. He heard hard heeled boots on the ground behind him, and turned his head and saw the object of his thoughts. And at the same instant Major Rooney saw him, too.

"Morning, Baucompe," Rooney, with cold formality, greeted him. "My presence surprises you, I take it. How soon do we start?"

Baucompe was surprised, but a sense of satisfaction filled him. For three years he had wanted to get Rooney into the air on a rough day—and today would be rough. He looked the Artillery officer up and down and observed that the other seemed none the worse for the night before. Rooney was meticulously dressed, as always, with boots polished like glass, with a Sam Browne belt, by Peel, set so that the gold buckle pressed into his rather pudgy stomach exactly in the middle. Rooney was not quite, but almost, fat; he weighed at least two hundred pounds, and was nearly as tall as Jones. His trim cap covered a head which was almost bald.

"Get in, sir," Baucompe said. "We're ready now."

THEY were standing out of low voiced earshot from the soldiers working at the balloon. Rooney bored Baucompe with his gaze, and the smaller man glared back at him.

"You were pretty nasty last night," the major declared suddenly. "I spent some time debating what action to take against you. When I left your quarters I was determined that you should not get away with it. Nor shall you—mark that! But before I decide upon anything I'll accept your challenge and go up with you. Perhaps there is something, after all, I can learn about a balloon. If I was wrong about my interpretation of aerobatics, the order will be rescinded."

Baucompe was mildly astonished.

"That's fine, sir."

"Not as fine, perhaps, as you imagine. You conducted yourself last night exactly as a common emergency officer might be expected to do. You were neither an officer nor a gentleman. There will be charges preferred on that basis when we return today. Do I make myself clear?"

"Exceedingly!" Baucompe snapped. "Get in—and keep out of the way."

His anger was almost consuming. He turned on his heel and walked down the slope toward where the basket was resting lightly on the ground. The major followed.

They reached the balloon, and Baucompe climbed grimly in. Rooney followed, moving his great weight ponderously, with surprising awkwardness. He spoke casually to Jones, found one corner of the basket and grasped a stay

to brace himself. Baucompe swept his gaze over the instruments in the basket, located everything in its proper place and to his liking. The motor of the winch chugged softly, in readiness for emergency, should one arise which required the sudden descent of the big gas bag.

"Let 'er go!" Baucompe suddenly ordered.

A mechanic on the winch seat threw his weight against a lever. The cable reel commenced slowly to unwind, the brake drum squealing in a low pitched voice. The great envelop tugged upward awesomely, swung into the wind and poised a moment directly overhead, then caught the upper air and swung its nose up while the flabby stabilizing fins collapsed, filled with air and at last grew firm.

The sound of the winch diminished; they rode slowly into the ghoulish silence of the realm of scudding clouds. Baucompe watched his instruments intently. At a thousand feet he yelled into the telephone.

"Hold it here for five minutes."

There was a jerk on the cable as the winch reel stopped against the brake. Baucompe stood at the end of the basket, his telephone strapped to his chest, holding to the stays above his head. His eyes roved restlessly across the choppy waters outside the bay. A wind was kicking up whitecaps; the day promised to be rough, and this pleased him. Already the wind was moaning softly through the rigging of the sausage, pulsating with the gusts. Baucompe was coldly furious.

"Why the delay?" Rooney asked, addressing the question to no one in particular.

He was not as sure of himself in this foreign element as on the ground.

"Temperature of the air is higher here than on the ground, sir," Jones explained. "We always wait until the gas in the balloon can absorb some of the heat. The gas in the bag expands when it gets warmer, and it expands also when we go higher and the air pressure grows less. Can't have the two forces working together or you'll rip a seam." He smiled knowingly. "If we ripped a seam very badly, we'd come down from here in a pile."

"I see," Rooney said. "It seems to me they would do something about that. It might be important to get the observer up in a hurry in time of war."

"It is to a certain extent," Jones replied, "with a balloonet. And then you could, if necessary, release some gas. We do it this way to save gas."

"Quite right. Baucompe, it doesn't seem so rough up here to me. I thought you said it was always rough."

"Wait," Baucompe promised grimly.

Ten minutes later they were up. The balloon, tugging doggedly at the steel cable which held it to the ground, swung far out over the sea, almost a quarter of a mile from land, and its blunt nose pointed into the wind and swung and bobbed and pitched. The basket careened with each variation of the envelop, now canted at a forty-five degree angle, now hanging momentarily inert. Rooney, after the first vicious plunge in gusty air, was silent regarding his opinions. His knuckles were white where he gripped the stay to hold himself from falling out. He found the basket very crowded with three men riding in it, and he was at the very edge. He noticed, suddenly, that Jones and Baucompe had parachutes which they could use if necessary. He had none.

"What if something should happen to the balloon?" he asked, keeping the anxiety from his voice. "How could I get down?" His uncertain perch there in the basket seemed somehow suddenly to reduce him to a basis of equality with the other men.

"Nothing ever happens," Jones assured him.

Rooney weighed this in his mind for a few moments, and then suggested:

"I would feel more comfortable if I had a parachute. Would it be difficult to go down and pick one up?"

"We have only the two," Jones said. "We don't have a spare."

Baucompe looked at Rooney almost insolently.

"I'll give the major mine, if something happens," he promised resentfully.

A voice came up the wire from the chart room of the artillery battery:

"Hello, hello, balloon? Can you hear me? . . . O. K, stand by."

Baucompe said to Jones:

"Chart room calling. Guess they'll be ready to fire in a minute."

THE major of Artillery, with Jones' binoculars to his eyes, surveyed the blue Pacific for the target. He clung to his stay with one crooked elbow, and tried to hold the glasses steady with his other hand. But he could not find the target tug because of the shifting of the basket under him. At last disgusted, he turned his attention to the sights below.

Diamond Head, the Gibraltar of the Pacific, smiled up at him through half a mile of space and haze. To the left was the city of Honolulu, and the Bay and Pearl Harbor, the Naval Base and Luke Field. Far away to the right lay the island of Hawaii; and Mona Kea and Mona Loa jutted their peaks into the film of scattered clouds. A squatty steamer off the promontory wallowed away toward Ilio Point, belching black smoke that drifted rapidly away behind it and extended, a dark smudge on the surface of the sea, ten miles to the leeward. Rooney turned to Jones.

"Wonderful view from here," he said, quite enthusiastically. "You fellows don't have a half bad job." He glanced at Baucompe.

But Baucompe was busy with the telephone:

"Hello . .,. Yes, balloon speaking . . . All right, go ahead. Stand by for a repeat. O. K?"

He wrote rapidly on a pad on his charting board, quickly rechecked his orders into the telephone transmitter.

"Battery Harlow—twelve inch high explosive firing on tow target seven thousand yards off the coast at Diamond Head—time of flight fifty-nine seconds —battery ready . . . All right, I got it. Yes, balloon ready. Let it go—hold it! Balloon position nine-two-six-one dash three-nine-eight-five; altitude twenty-nine hundred feet. O. K? . . . O. K." He turned to the major. "We're ready, sir." He pointed out the red triangular object moving northward at about five knots. "There's the target. Keep the cross hairs of your glasses on it and watch for the splash of the shell. I'll repeat the time as it comes in."

He grimaced in acrid amusement as Rooney tried to center the glasses, then turned once more to the telephone.

"Battery fire!" he barked into the instrument.

A mortar back of Diamond Head vomited smoke and flame and steel, and through the telephone came the report, long before the concussion drifted up to them:

"Battery fired. Stand by for time of flight . . . Fifty-five." There was a five second pause. "Fifty." Another pause, and then the operator in the chart room chanted the projectile's time of flight at five second intervals:

"Forty-five — forty — thirty-five — thirty — twenty-five — twenty — fifteen — ten — five-four-three-two-one — *target!*"

"Get it, Major?" Baucompe asked. Then to Jones, "What about deflection?"

The two lieutenants conferred a moment, then Baucompe spoke into his telephone once more:

"Eight hundred yards short; thirty mills right. Damn near hit the tug with that one. Watch it!"

"That's peculiar," said Major Rooney of the Artillery. "I'd swear I saw that shell splash just in front of the target when you said 'ten'. I thought the chart room had given you the wrong time on the shell."

"Oh, that?" Jones asked, grinning. "That was a whale spouting, Major.

That's a whale, in spite of your incredulity. And it takes a lot of practise to tell the difference. They sometimes follow the tug looking for food."

"The concussion doesn't kill them?" Rooney asked.

"Apparently not. I've seen them several times during the past year. That's just another of our problems—telling the difference."

"H'mm," the major mused, evidently skeptical. He thought Jones was giving him a laugh.

The balloon caught a hard gust and slid earthward three hundred feet. Rooney was suddenly weightless on his feet, almost suspended while the basket fell away from him. He tightened his grip on the stay rope, and was thankful that he had when the sausage took an upward thrust and leaped back to its original position and snapped hard against the cable. Rooney's knees bent under his weight and he slipped to the floor, jamming between the other men. Jones helped him to his feet. Baucompe was busy with his telephone.

"Damned if this thing isn't rough sometimes!" Rooney conceded in surprise. "I can't understand how it can be tied to a cable and still jump around so."

Jones replied innocently:

"It's really smooth now—the wind's just rising. Wait until about noon, when we are ready to go down."

The battery belched again, and Baucompe, working with silent efficiency over his computations, sent down corrections. He had little time and no desire to explain the technique of handling a "shoot" from the air; Rooney knew as much as there was to know about it on the ground.

The major at last tired of straining his eyes for shell splashes which he could rarely see, and became interested in the various instruments the basket held. He watched the manometer and the statoscope and the altimeter, and the other instruments of flight, with the typical curiosity of a landsman up for the first time; and he was rather surprised to discover that the statoscope really registered the rise and fall of the basket in the gusty air, that even the altimeter needle wavered and showed a movement downward and then up again.

BUT he could not see everything from where he stood. Despite the fact that the basket was built for two men, and that he was much larger than an ordinary person, he crowded to one side, not rudely, but with a slow, polite progress. Another gust caught him in this position, throwing him against Jones, and then against Baucompe. The latter had just been watching for a shell near the target, and removed his binoculars from his eyes at the moment Rooney jostled him. In that gust the major grabbed for a stay by which to support himself, struck Baucompe's glasses accidentally and knocked them spinning over the side.

"Too bad!" he exclaimed. "Sorry. Had to reach for something or I'd have been out there!" He laughed nervously and stepped back to his corner of the basket.

Baucompe looked at him for a long moment, bit his tongue savagely, finally said to Jones—

"Give me your glasses, if you don't mind."

A tension settled over the men. Baucompe was trying to handle the "shoot", but his mind returned persistently to the charges he knew Rooney would prefer against him when they reached the earth again. Jones felt sorry for the major, yet angry too. But he did not know about Baucompe's predicament. Rooney was sullen, out of his element, beginning to regret that he had come along, for the continued hammering of the gusts was beginning to produce a peculiar sensation in his stomach.

Shell after shell from the mortar back of Diamond Head sought out its trajectory and plunged into the depths of

the Pacific. Some of them passed so near the balloon that the trio in the basket could hear the crescendo of their cleavage of the air, like the launching of a great skyrocket. One after another they slid into the water, some with a tremendous splash of brine and spray, others without making a disturbance upon the wind whipped surface.

The wind was freshening steadily. It was almost impossible, now, for the guns to hold deflection accurately. Baucompe might send down a correction of twenty mills right, and the gun crews would swing their pieces and fire another salvo, yet the wind would make the deflection error greater than before. It might shift the center of impact from right to left four hundred yards with the guns remaining in the same position. A very gusty wind, Jones explained to Rooney. The worst wind in more than a year of continual firing. It was blowing at thirty miles or more an hour at their elevation, with greater velocities higher up.

Finally the guns stopped their work, for it was useless to continue, and word came up the wire to haul the balloon down. Rooney, by this time, was almost sick; he would be sick before the balloon could be yanked from the sky. But he was struggling to avoid this humiliation by looking steadfastly out to sea and whistling a quiet, somber tune. Jones stood in the middle of the basket, his hands stretched up to grasp the suspension bar.

"Major Rooney," Jones said, "you can get some idea of what we're up against day after day. It's just beginning to get rough."

But the major of Artillery did not reply. Whatever his reactions were, he was suddenly occupied with nausea and its convulsions. Jones grasped the shiny Peel belt to keep a gust from throwing the other overboard.

Baucompe cased Jones' binoculars and made ready to assist the winch operator by telephone. At last the vibration of the winch came up to them through the cable. The balloon shuddered faintly and slowly started down.

Always, when the balloon was being pulled to earth, Baucompe gave occasional orders and advice to the men operating the winch. This was necessary because an observer on the ground cannot possibly estimate accurately the rate of descent, the settling or climbing of the bag. And in a high wind the operation of the winch must be in exact coordination with the movements of the balloon.

From Baucompe's actions it seemed hardly possible that he gave the craft a thought, yet his every sense was alert for the reaction to a sudden dive or zoom. He did this work by "feel", and during these times of descent he was almost a part of the balloon. He stood in one end of the basket and looked down and out to sea appraisingly. The variations of the car brought no change in countenance; and although the sausage might slither sickeningly a thousand feet and bound right back again upon the wind, he merely grasped the edge of the basket more firmly and continued to give directions to the crew below. Ordinarily when he was not speaking there was no sound except the soughing of the wind through the rigging, and an occasional remark from Jones. Today there were these sounds, and the evidences of Major Rooney's agony.

A captive balloon is like a kite, wherefore the term, kite balloon. When the wind is strong it will at times dive a thousand feet before it wrenches itself out of the gust of wind and zooms again. Oddly, while a dive like that is being made, the winch on the ground cannot reel in cable, but must pay it out; and after the big bag has ceased its dive and started to rocket up again, the winch takes in cable hurriedly, and then slacks off at the balloonist's orders, and finally starts once more an orderly descent of the mass of rope and cloth and rubber.

Thus pulling down a balloon in a high wind is a battle between the winch and the wind. There is a constant element

of danger, for a clumsy move by the winch operator, a misjudgment of the balloonist, or a combination of these two may snap the cable when the huge craft crashes back and draws it taut.

THE winch, now, was having difficulties. It yanked and pulled and got the balloon started down, only to have a gust of wind tear the huge craft from its grasp. The winch payed out cable, pulled in cable, stopped at last on Baucompe's orders. And when it stopped the balloon was back where it had been.

They tried it again. The winch got them down to the thousand foot level and the men on the ground began to breathe more freely, when suddenly the bag dived and whipped the cable viciously. It seemed for a moment that the basket would be flung into the ground. Baucompe barked an order into his telephone and the winch responded. It payed out cable furiously and the guides screamed. Finally the balloon checked its wild plunge and started up again. It rocketed two thousand feet while the winch motor roared and the sheaves whined as the line raced in across them.

Then the winch mechanic made a mistake. For an instant his attention was distracted by a skip in his engine. With the loss of power he shoved his throttle lever open another notch in an attempt to pull in all the loose line before the balloon smashed up to draw it taut. Just then Baucompe's voice came down the wire with the order to release the reel and slack off. The winch operator reached for his throttle to slow the reel. He put a slight pressure on his snatch brake. The reel was still turning when he shifted his weight to release the clutch. But he didn't get the clutch released in time. The balloon took up the slack.

The balloon took up the slack while the winch was still pulling in cable. There was the concerted force of the balloon on one end of the line and the winch reel on the other. Eleven thousand pounds of force hit the line. It was built for ten, and it was so old there was no stretch left in it.

There was a sharp explosion. The cable snapped just below the basket, and fell away in writhing loops and coils.

For a moment the balloon hung motionless, as if reacting to the shock. Then it steadied and started upward with a rush of speed. Baucompe yelled something and grabbed for the red rip panel cord. Jones, who had instantly understood their situation, released Rooney's belt and with a lightning movement struck Baucompe's hand down from the rip panel cord.

"Don't rip it!" Jones cried. "He hasn't got a parachute!" He indicated Rooney, who, still sick, was taking no interest in this sudden hazard.

Baucompe nodded. He had, momentarily, forgotten Rooney's presence in the basket.

"Valve it!" he snapped, and began to get out of his parachute harness.

Jones, slightly pale, yanked down on the valve cord to release gas. Baucompe grasped Rooney's shoulder and whirled him around.

"Get into this harness," Baucompe barked. "Quick!"

And when Rooney hesitated, Baucompe lifted the major's arm and started to slip the harness on his shoulders.

"What's this?" Rooney asked, groggy from nausea. "What's happened?"

Baucompe's voice was like ice.

"We're adrift—blowing out to sea in the worst wind this place ever saw except a storm."

The major turned a shade whiter, if possible, than he had been. He looked down for an instant, and back toward the land they were leaving rapidly, and when again he met Baucompe's gaze his lips were trembling. For Diamond Head was already two miles away, the channel of water widening momentarily.

"Why can't you land?" Rooney asked.

"I'll land all right," Baucompe snapped. "Get in this harness."

The major looked back toward the island.

"You're not landing," he declared. "You fool, you're getting higher all the time!"

"Get this harness on—and shut up!" Baucompe bellowed. "Jones, let that valve cord go. Give me a hand here."

Together they got Rooney into the harness, which was too small for him and had to be adjusted. By this time the balloon was at seven thousand feet, going up with a rush, and had drifted four miles from the shore. But a small boat, Baucompe saw, was chasing them. It was losing distance, but it would be there on the sea to pick Jones and Rooney up when they floated to the water.

"All right," Baucompe said. "Over you go. Pile out. That boat will pick you up."

Jones understood. He and Baucompe had discussed this course of action many times; he knew that a west wind blew higher up, that Baucompe, alone in a light and buoyant balloon, might reach this wind and drift back and perhaps eventually land upon the island. That was now the plan. But only the smallest man could stay. He and the major had to jump, and he was wondering if Rooney had the fortitude to go.

"All set, Major?" Jones asked, grinning. "I'll jump first. You follow at my heels. Nice ride down!"

But there was a peculiar, set expression around Rooney's mouth. He made no move. A debate was taking place within his mind.

"Won't have a chance down there because of sharks," he finally declared. "We're safer up here. I'm going to stay."

Jones glanced at Baucompe, then grasped Rooney's arm.

"Major," he said, "you and I can't stay. We'd all be killed. There's a boat down there to pick us up. We've got to jump."

"No!" Rooney snapped, his decision made. "I'm not that much of a fool. I've seen what sharks can do!"

"Every second you two guys stay cuts my chances!" Baucompe cried hotly.

He debated against a sudden desire. He wanted to take the parachute back, and jump with Jones—leave Rooney here to die. For Rooney then would die. Here, Baucompe thought resentfully, was the man who would have him up before a court if they both lived through this ordeal. But Baucompe fought the impulse down.

Jones was trying to get up on the basket edge. He said to Baucompe:

"He'll go after awhile—let him get his nerve. Here, Major, give me a hand, will you? Help me out."

Rooney leaned against the edge of the basket. Jones climbed up, holding to Rooney's shoulder. Then suddenly Jones was gone, and Baucompe waited for the snap of the parachute when it opened. Rooney looked around and nodded. Baucompe, on his side of the basket, looked down to see Jones, but was unable to. He leaned far over. He looked back to see what the major had done, and to his surprise Major Will R. Rooney had followed Jones! And at that instant Baucompe heard an agonized shout, and the dull booming of two parachutes opening in quick succession.

BAUCOMPE forgot the other two and turned to his instruments. His manometer showed the gas pressure in the balloon dangerously high, and he valved enough to reduce it. The balloon went to twelve thousand feet in the climb following its release from the weight of the two who had jumped, and then slowed and went on up two more, where it paused, unable to go higher. The air grew cold. The sudden change in atmospheric pressure made Baucompe's eardrums throb.

At fourteen thousand five hundred feet Baucompe began to throw off what little surplus weight the basket contained. The binoculars and telephones followed each other over the side to the yawning Pacific nearly three miles be-

low. The sausage gained two hundred feet. The basket rug, observer's seat, Baucompe's leather jacket, boots and lastly breeches followed them. The balloon went up five hundred more.

At slightly more than fifteen thousand feet they were out of the east wind. The balloon seemed motionless, but Baucompe hoped that it was drifting back. Yet an hour went by and the island was still as far away as ever. A cluster of boats, distant specks upon the distant sea, clung directly below and waited for what Baucompe might do.

He stood there shivering from the cold for still another hour, found that the bag was moving eastward none at all. Above, where it was not blotted out by the belly of the great gray bag, the sky was a deep and lifeless blue. The clouds were long since gone; the universe extended away into infinity on every side, a grayish haze where the horizon should have been. The mercury of the thermometer had tumbled down and hung now just above the bulb, marking a temperature slightly below freezing. The cold crept through Baucompe with insidious weight, bringing, at last, a not unpleasant numbness.

He had saved his pocket knife. Now he did a desperate thing, for an ultimate landing in the water was almost inevitable. He slashed away the flotation ring around the basket, cut away the basket's lining. Thus released of nearly forty pounds of weight, the balloon went up again.

And so into a slight west wind, and more cold, and hours on end of waiting, with the outcome hanging to a whim of fate.

At noon the derelict was drifting very slowly past the island. At one o'clock it reached the end, and passed out to sea to the eastward. At 2:00 o'clock it was ten miles from the coast. At 2:29 the clock stopped from the congealing of the oil within it.

But Baucompe still crouched in the basket, numb and lethargic from the cold. Only now and then he looked down, and when he did, it was more to try to see the smoke of a ship than to see how far he had been blown in this interminable space of time.

It was only when the sun had dipped down almost to the sea that the officer finally climbed stiffly to his feet and reached for the valve cord again. He tugged at it with the little strength remaining in his muscles, and tied it down, after which once more he slumped to the wicker floor. In that position he watched his statoscope to study the rate of fall. The balloon slipped down a thousand feet, and Baucompe released the valve. The balloon continued down, struck the east wind, and slid rapidly across the sky toward the island once again.

He was five miles from shore when he discovered that the craft's speed was diminishing. The wind had had, until now, a thirty-mile velocity near the earth, but it seemed dying out. There was not a steamer visible on the surface of the sea, and hence Baucompe could not discover the direction of the wind at lower altitudes, or its approximate strength. He continued valving gas, holding the balloon's descent to a steady, rapid pace.

At five thousand feet they were drifting just above the fringe of the island. At two thousand they were motionless. Baucompe released the valve cord, but the balloon continued downward from its momentum to a thousand feet.

And there, to the officer's surprise, he found that the wind had shifted slightly. He was veering away—going diagonally out to sea again! The boats which had followed him in the morning were nowhere to be seen; the ocean was bare of surface craft. He grabbed the valve cord and tugged it down.

THE basket dipped into the water with a splash, sank, with water spurting through the wicker reeds, until it was submerged. And there it stayed. The weight partially removed from it, the

balloon reached a point of equilibrium in the air, and drifted very slowly, its nose high in the air and the bottom fin dragging in the water.

Baucompe had no sea anchor. Provision for landing in the ocean—emergency equipment—had been provided by the flotation gear and the basket lining—both of which Baucompe had thrown away to lessen weight. He stood now thigh deep, and the water warmed him. He was more than a mile from shore, and while he could have managed that distance swimming, he knew that sharks would probably have him five minutes after he abandoned the safety of his basket.

The sun sank behind the island, obscured by the crest of Diamond Head. Dusk fell, and the derelict drifted silently, making hardly any headway, but at sufficient speed that morning would find it well at sea and out of sight. Baucompe decided to abandon it and trust to luck in getting in.

But just as he was ready to dive overboard, he heard the mutter of a boat's engine. He climbed up on to the suspension bar above the basket, but the balloon was so heavy it would not support his weight in that position, and let him down once more into the water. He slipped back into the basket and the craft resumed its original position.

The boat approached. Some one shouted, and Baucompe answered. The boat came drifting up, and Baucompe saw Jones on its bow.

"Wet?" Jones yelled. "I'll make fast to the cable end and then we'll take you aboard. Mister, you had a ride!"

All this was accomplished, and Baucompe was pulled up by eager hands. The balloon immediately rose, released of his weight. The boat headed up and started back, the great balloon in tow. It was slow going.

"Get down all right?" Baucompe asked Jones, after he had smoked a cigaret in silence. "Say, where's Rooney?"

"Safe at the officers' club, I suppose. That's were he was headed when he left me. We both got wet, but not for long. He stood it surprisingly well."

And Jones laughed, loud and long, until the laugh became a chuckle. But Baucompe saw nothing funny in the situation.

"I expect this adds another count for me, for making him jump," he said. "I didn't think he was going to have the nerve to go."

"Well—" Jones chuckled—"he isn't a bad guy."

"He's poison to me," Baucompe declared.

"Not any more." Jones grinned. "Fact is, he thinks a lot of you. He admitted as much to me this afternoon."

"He's kidding you," Baucompe grumbled. "Right now he's probably writing up the charges."

There was a twinkle in Jones' eyes.

"We discussed that," he said. "He's your friend."

There was a long silence, while Baucompe digested this.

"There's something wrong about this," he finally said. "Human nature can't change like that. Whatever happened to him?"

"We got back to the Post, and everybody was excited—made over us like we were heroes. So Rooney, being a good actor, played the part—told about what happened—how he'd felt when he knew he'd have to jump—how he climbed up and dived over. Really, he made quite a story of it all. He just talked too much."

"Well?" Baucompe asked.

"When he got through," Jones smiled, "I called him aside. I asked him what he meant to do with you, and he wouldn't commit himself. So I asked him how he'd like to have it discovered by all his friends that he wouldn't jump by himself—that I had to pull him overboard to get him to leave at all."

"You yanked him over?" Baucompe asked, incredulous.

"Sure. And he decided we were the best of friends. He's coming up tonight to have a drink."

Brother Jaguar

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

I WAS riding one morning with a crowd of *llaneros,* or pampas cowpunchers, along the grass covered bank of the Arauca River, in Colombia, when we stopped in our tracks, alarmed by a terrible racket and a furious splashing in the water of the nearby stream.

Leading our horses, we picked our way cautiously through the tall *gramalote* grass until we reached the shore where, amazed, we beheld a unique spectacle: a fight to the death between a giant croc and a rosetted jaguar. They kept rolling over and over in the middle of the stream like a couple of seals, tearing at and ripping each other's limbs with so much ferocity that soon the sluggish surface of the river was turned crimson and began to boil and foam like a miniature whirlpool.

Occasionally Brother Jaguar's wet, sleek head would come up, of a sudden, only to disappear again with an ear-splitting roar; while Scaly Jim, with his powerful jaws fastened on one of the jaguar's legs, hung grimly to his prey, his long tail now and then striking the surface of the river with a splash that sent the spray flying around like a geyser.

After five or six minutes of suspense, the scrap drew to its end. Ultimately, Brother Jaguar's square head emerged slowly from the depths—looking like a wet cat—minus one ear and one eye, but otherwise cheerful. And after listening for awhile to our enthusiastic *vivas!* (for some of us had bet our bottom dollar on him and won) he finally turned around, rather reluctantly, and struck out leisurely in the direction of the opposite shore; probably because he was a wise old duck, and knew by experience, enthusiasm can't be trusted!

That cat must have been in a hurry when it tried to cross the river without taking the necessary precautions, for jaguars rarely cross a stream without preparing the ground first. They know that crocs are bad *hombres* and not to be trifled with, especially in their home element.

Whenever a jaguar—or a dog, for that matter—wants to cross a jungle stream in which alligators abound, he usually picks out a stretch of sandy shore which leads for a considerable distance upstream. Then, standing at the water's edge, he starts his performance; which means that he starts growling and yowling at the top of his voice, with his head turned upriver so as to reach the ears—if they possess ears—of the alligators.

As soon as the psychological moment arrives, that is, as soon as the jaguar considers that every croc within reach of his fearful voice has joined his audience, he slinks noiselessly into the nearby jungle, races upstream a few hundred yards and crosses, unhampered by the crocs which were foolish enough to let themselves be decoyed downstream by his fancy show.

It is for that reason that I suppose the jaguar, whose fight with the alligator we witnessed that day, must have been in a terrible hurry. Nevertheless, it was a corking good scrap, which we enjoyed immensely, though at some expense to poor Brother Jaguar for having failed to obey the code of the jungle. For nature is inexorable, and punishes mercilessly all those who fail to abide by her laws.

A Story of Native Morocco

The MAGICIAN FROM TIMBUKTU

By GEORGE E. HOLT

AL-LATEEF the Clever One stood in the presence of majesty. Cross legged upon a crimson dais, Buddha-like, sat a young man swathed in robes of immaculate whiteness, white stockinged feet tucked under him. An incipient beard and mustache were black against the paleness of his skin. His large brown eyes beneath heavy, dark eyebrows were partially curtained by drooping lids with long lashes. Beneath his white turban the startling crimson edge of a fez was like a slash of blood.

His fine hands, jewelless, were clasped in his lap. His shoulders, like his eyelids, drooped. He was a young man bearing a great burden, a burden of responsibility and disillusionment and fear. He was Abd-el-Aziz ben el-Hassan, decendant of the Prophet Mohammed, Prince of Believers, Commander of the Faithful, the Shadow of Allah on

earth—and Sultan of Morocco.

At the face of majesty Al-Lateef gazed steadily but respectfully.

Until a little more than a month before this present day he, Al-Lateef, had been an outlaw cursed by the condemnation of this mighty youth, who now sat formulating phrases in his mind. He had been outlawed for rebellion against injustice. The name of Al-Lateef, the Clever One, had gone up and down the land until, as he had come to know with amusement, it had become a legend, had come to stand for all that was clever and audacious and surprising.

And then, after a year of that, a sudden jest of Allah—a jest by which both the head of Al-Lateef and the throne of this youth before him had been placed in jeopardy, a jesting puzzle of fate which Al-Lateef had solved by becoming for the moment a wondrous black magician from Timbuktu—had wiped the stain of outlawry from his name, had elevated him to that dignity and responsibility which now permitted him to stand alone in the presence of his Sultan. Which, in short, had made him chief of the Sultan's secret service, had placed upon him the heavy duty of protecting the Sultan's person, his throne and his country from the constant assaults being made upon them by European adventurers, by European goverments—and by those of his own people who, whether actuated by selfish or patriotic purposes, were a menace to the stability of the shareefian dynasty.

An odd jest, reflected Al-Lateef, and perhaps a dangerous one. For, as he well knew, the favor of Sultans was oftimes as dangerous as their disfavor. He perceived clearly what few men see: That the ruler of a nation, whether he be the president of a republic or the autocrat of an empire, must subordinate the good of the individual for the benefit of the whole people; must in the individual case ignore all the standards of ethics and morality and law by which a populace is governed, in order to protect that populace against dangers it does not foresee and could not understand.

The young man on the dais spoke. His words were low and slowly enunciated. Al-Lateef was aware that for every spoken word a hundred had been formulated, considered and dismissed.

"There is one who has rebelled against our commands," said the slow voice. "He has in the past received honors from us. But now that we have given him a command which he dislikes, he defies us. We have issued an edict of outlawry against him. He who was the basha of Tangier has fled with his people, has taken refuge in his fortified village of Zinat. We desire his captivity or his death. Our command, then, to you is that you bring Mohamed Ali to us, dead or alive."

"Mohamed Ali!"

Al-Lateef felt a queer tingling sensation, had a swift thought of humorous resentment against the destiny which had made him what he now was. He might have known, so the thought ran, that the same jesting fate which had ordained his metamorphosis from outlaw to chief of the secret service, would have had other jests in store for him. Mohamed Ali! The only man in all Morocco of whom he felt he might properly be afraid. The one man in all Morocco—now that Sidi Mohamed Torres, the famous diplomat, was dead—who had a brain as keen as a sword and as swift as Allah's lightning, and who feared no man on earth.

That Mohamed Ali had been outlawed heretofore, Al-Lateef was well aware. An even greater legend than that which surrounded his own name had grown up about that of Mohamed Ali. Time after time had Mohamed Ali outwitted his enemies, even the Sultan himself. Time after time had he forced the restoration of his properties and dignities and official position by a coup which had echoed around the world. Thrice had he held captive important Europeans—once an American—until the

terms he had made to the Sultan and his advisers had been granted.

Once had American warships steamed into Tangier Bay to force the Sultan to comply with his desires. Of noble descent, even as the Sultan himself, Mohamed Ali was a *shareef* with a large following; he had been governor of his own native district, and in that district possessed the fortified village of Zinat, where he had now taken refuge, as he had done upon other occasions.

All of these matters raced through Al-Lateef's mind before the Sultan, having finished, fully uncovered his eyes to look at his subject.

"I understand, Sidna," said Al-Lateef. "Dead or alive, you want—Mohamed Ali."

The Sultan nodded slowly, lips compressed.

"It is so ordered," he said. "You have my leave to go."

Al-Lateef salaamed and backed from the room. Outside the heavy velvet curtains which hung from the arched doorway, he paused and pulled his nose.

"Mohamed Ali!" he exclaimed to himself. "I wonder if it would not be better for me to run away. Paris, they say, is a pleasant place to live."

However, this was no joking matter. In his own heart Al-Lateef could feel no enmity toward Mohamed Ali. He himself too recently had been, as it were, in Mohamed Ali's slippers, for him to have any zest for the capture or the possible death of a man who had rebelled against his Sultan's orders. He recalled what little he had chanced to hear of the situation which had driven Mohamed Ali from his post as basha of Tangier into the defenses of Zinat. He recalled that there were reasons why Mohamed Ali should be deprived of the bashalik of Tangier.

Al-Lateef knew that Mohamed Ali was looked upon with fear and suspicion by Europe; that the European diplomatic and consular corps in Tangier feared him, and had brought unceasing pressure to bear upon the Sultan for his removal because they knew him to be violently anti-European, suspecting that he was using his official position to block the plans of certain European nations for the dominance of Morocco.

Yes, he could see the Sultan's reason for removing Mohamed Ali. But he could see also Mohamed Ali's reasons for objecting to such procedure. In his heart he sympathized with the big, brown man whose Rabelaisian laughter and brilliant mind had caused many a European chancellor disturbed days and wakeful nights.

But even though this was his feeling about Mohamed Ali, he had an even stronger feeling about Al-Lateef. Not only that he had of his own volition assumed the responsibilities of his present post, a responsibility which could have no consideration or sympathy for a thing that menaced the Sultan's throne—but it was as plain as the slippers on his feet that, in order to prevent himself from falling again under the pain of the Sultan's displeasure, under the penalty of being deprived of his post and becoming either prisoner or outlaw, he could not, must not, indulge in any sympathetic attitude toward a rebel. His own misdeeds were too fresh in the Sultan's mind. The Sultan's forgiveness was too recent a thing. Yes, he could see clearly now that it was either his head or Mohamed Ali's. The resentment of the Sultan at any wavering on his part would be fatal. Mohamed Ali's head or his own; and of the two he much preferred his own.

Repugant as the job would be, he resolved firmly that he would make every attempt to justify the Sultan's confidence in him, to carry out the imperial orders. But—and this was with a little inward smile of both relief and amusement—he perceived that it was quite as possible that Mohamed Ali might win the duel of wits as that he himself should be the victor. Perhaps, even, the odds were in favor of Mohamed Ali. About no other man would Al-Lateef have felt

thus. But Mohamed Ali!

Wherefore, his conscience relieved no little by perception of the equalities of the conflict, and recognizing that immediate action was expected by the Sultan, Al-Lateef sought his quarters, squatted upon a silken floor cushion, opened a fresh package of cigarets and started in on his problem.

A result of his cogitations was reached in Al-Lateef fashion.

"Mohamed Ali," he told himself, "is in Zinat. I am in Fez. Assuredly Mohamed Ali will not come to Fez where I can lay hands upon him. I can not capture him unless I am where he is. Therefore my logic tells me that there is but one thing to do. I must go to Zinat. That is a point established. But obviously I can not go in my proper person. What guise shall I take on?

"A wandering minstrel perhaps, or an itinerant holy man? Or a beggar with well polished bowl? Or—or— Ha! That business of the magician from Timbuktu! It was never known save to my friend Hajeeb and to the Sultan —and yes, to Abd-el-Malek, the basha of Fez Djedid—only to those three was it known that Al-Lateef was the magician from Timbuktu. That disguise was perfect. No one penetrated it, I am sure. Even those three had to be told. Wherefore, I shall go as the black magician of Timbuktu to visit Mohamed Ali at Zinat."

AT ALMOST the same hour that Al-Lateef the Clever One was listening to his Majesty's commands with respect to Mohamed Ali, Mohamed Ali, squatting upon a prayer rug in the sweet shade of an ancient olive tree at Zinat, wrapped in a brown *sulham,* was making a plan of his own. That there was an element of humor in his thoughts was indicated by the broad grin which now and then widened the lips in his big, brown-bearded face.

A big man was Mohamed Ali, big and brown and strong with the strength of his Riffi ancestors. Eagle of the Angheras, he had been called, and eagle he was, high soaring and swift to act. His dark eyes were set far apart as though to see around an obstacle or a danger; his big nose was eagle-like, and his short, clipped brown beard and mustache seemed to add virility to his powerful face and figure.

The tree beneath which he sat was on a little hill outside the fortifying wall of the village. From where he sat he could and did look down upon his little citadel, watched his soldiers occupied with cleaning their guns and accouterments or currying their horses. He saw the villagers going about their appointed tasks, the children and dogs playing in the yellow dust. A strong position and one which could hold off for quite a while any troops which the Sultan at the moment could send against him, he reflected. For many tribes were restless or in actual rebellion in the interior and the government soldiers were mostly occupied in keeping the anti-European flames from spreading.

But Mohamed Ali was too wise to make the mistake of believing that present security was any guaranty of the future. As a first move, to withdraw to Zinat was an excellent one. The only one, in fact. But he was quite well aware that it was only the first move in the game he was playing. Zinat would eventually be surrounded by the Sultan's troops, against whom his few hundred followers would be helpless.

Besides, it was none of his intention to be an outlaw for long. The purpose of the occupation of Zinat was only to give him time to plan another coup which should return him to his honors and offices, to the favor of the Sultan—and perhaps incidentally to put money into his treasure chest which would enable him to carry on more effectively his efforts to prevent Europe from gobbling up his country.

The Sultan he despised as a weakling who had permitted himself to be surrounded by European intriguers bent

upon his destruction; as an incompetent who lacked the vision to perceive the trend of affairs. A monarch who was thrusting Morocco into foreign domination and who depended upon the undependable while he punished those who might have aided him.

Zinat was an accomplished fact. Thus the mind of Mohamed Ali was now considering the question of the coup he would have to effect in order to cease being an outlaw, to get back his honors and privileges and properties.

But his mind was now disturbed by a factor which hitherto had been negligible. In his belt was a communication from a friend at court, telling him that Sidi Hassan Sanhajji, otherwise Al-Lateef the Clever One, was now chief of the Sultan's secret service As Al-Lateef knew of Mohamed Ali and his capacities, so Mohamed Ali knew of Al-Lateef and his accomplishments.

And as Al-Lateef knew his opponent for a dangerous man, so Mohamed Ali now perceived that it was Al-Lateef who might bring disaster to any plans he should make. This entirely aside from the warning contained in the communication in his belt—the warning from his friend that if there was any other man in the country who was as clever as Mohamed Ali, that man was Al-Lateef. So the big, brown outlaw sat beneath his olive tree and thought about this man, who unquestionably would now be thinking about him.

With as much celerity as Al-Lateef had shown, Mohamed Ali reached the conclusion that prompt and immediate action was a prime necessity. No grass should grow under his slipper soles. Al-Lateef was noted for his audacity. Therefore, thought Mohamed Ali, Mohamed Ali must be more audacious than Al-Lateef. How? What would be Al-Lateef's procedure? What had taken place in Fez? Undoubtedly the young Sultan had called Al-Lateef into the presence and had said to him—

"Go and bring me the head of this Mohamed Ali."

What did Al-Lateef do then? That was a question somewhat difficult to answer. But perhaps by the process of elimination—assuredly Al-Lateef would not place himself at the head of a *harka* of soldiers and set forth with the expectation that Mohamed Ali would lay himself open to capture. Al-Lateef was called the Clever One. Good. That would mean that he would try some ruse instead of direct attack. What would that be? Manifestly he could not lay hands upon Mohamed Ali until he was in Mohamed Ali's presence. He would scarcely be in Mohamed Ali's presence as long as he was in Fez and Mohamed Ali was in Zinat. How, then, could this be overcome? Mohamed Ali saw two ways.

"He can come to Zinat, or he can induce me to come to Fez. I do not think he would come to Zinat. That would be carrying audacity to the point of suicide. And so—and so—I think that Sidi Hassan Sanhajji, otherwise Al-Lateef the Clever One, will try to get me to come to Fez. How could he accomplish that? But never mind. His methods will become apparent in due course. But now—audacity, eh? If, then, he expects me to go to Fez as the result of a trap set for me by him, he will not expect me to go to Fez before a trap is set for me. Wherefore—wherefore—"

For a moment he ceased thinking aloud to himself. But a moment later:

"This Al-Lateef is a menace. He may spoil everything. He must be gotten out of the way, much as I admire his intelligence. And so—" he straightened up, preparatory to rising—"and so Mohamed Ali goes to Fez before he is lured there. I don't think that Al-Lateef will anticipate that. We will feed the audacious one a whole bowlful of audacity. And if Allah wills, I shall bring him back with me to Zinat to enjoy my hospitality—while I finish my duel with the Sultan."

He stood up, yawned and stretched, and then his great laugh caused the vil-

lagers below him to look toward him and smile in response.

"Ho-ho!" he laughed. "It is a long time since Mohamed Ali has been to court."

Then, as he started slowly down the hill he added—

"And in what guise shall I enter Fez? I make a really good beggar when I try. As a holy man with a staff, I am not bad. But there is much crying for alms to be done as a beggar, and a holy man must do altogether too much walking."

At that moment a man of his own build came out of the gate in the village wall and approached him—a man arrayed in the same sort of brown *djellab,* the same fez and turban—a man who looked identical with Mohamed Ali, except for a white bandage about his head covering one eye.

"By Allah!" cried Mohamed Ali, "there is the answer to my question. My cousin Aïsa the One-eyed, a reputable business man—with a physical imperfection."

Aïsa the One-eyed slippered up to him and paused. Mohamed Ali laid a heavy hand on his cousin's shoulder and again his laugh rang out.

"Aïsa, my cousin, I have news for you."

"And that?" questioned Aïsa.

"You are going to Fez," said Mohamed Ali.

"But—but—" stammered Aïsa, "I have no desire to go to Fez."

"Nevertheless," said Mohamed Ali, "you shall go. I will explain."

ABOUT midway between the capital city of Fez and Mohamed Ali's *casbah* of Zinat lies the town called El K'sar-Kebir. It is a fortified town, which is to say that it is surrounded by massive brick walls pierced by numerous arched gateways and surmounted by an occasional watchtower. Besides this, it has a fairly strong citadel within the walls. El K'sar, so the story runs—and one who has visited the town has little reason to doubt the truth of the legend—set out to be an inland metropolis, an important station on the trade routes which connect the capital with the northern coast, and for those which converge upon it from the western ports.

Unfortunately for its destiny, however, some of its incautious inhabitants, who have long moldered to dust in the local cemetery, vastly annoyed a certain holy man, who thereupon deposited upon the town a double barreled curse, to wit: that it should be burned by flames in Summer and drowned by waves in Winter.

Whether or not the holy man's words were the result of heavenly inspiration, or whether they came merely from such observation as an intelligent holy man, resident in the vicinity, might be supposed to make, can not be affirmed. Nevertheless the fact remains that brick walled El K'sar is baked by the Summer suns and flooded by the Winter rains, to an extent which to this day has caused real estate values to be amazingly low, and the population to have remained stationary for many decades. As for its idea of being a metropolis, that was borne away by the hot winds or washed away by Winter downpours.

El K'sar today is little more than a big caravanserai where caravans and travelers may put up, if they can reach no better place. And travelers north or south between Tangier and Fez must pass through it.

Thus it came about that upon the day following Mohamed Ali's consideration of his problems, two travelers set forth upon the road which led to El K'sar. One of them left the northern gate of Fez behind him and, wrapped against the Summer sun, put his horse to that swift pace which the Arab can keep up almost indefinitely. That man was Al-Lateef the Clever One.

The second rider, mounted upon a sleek mule instead of a horse, rode down the hillside of Zinat until he came to the main highway, and then turned

south. He, too, was wrapped in a brown *djellab* against the sun. This man was Mohamed Ali.

But although in his natural appearance the Clever One was of as white blood and pale complexion as you or I —allowing for the tan which might modify us both startlingly—he had undergone a strange metamorphosis. In fact, it was not Al-Lateef who rode out of the northern gate of Fez. Al-Lateef had been left invisibly in the quarters of the chief of the secret service in Fez; the man who now rode in his place was Sidi Ajuba, the black magician from Timbuktu.

His skin was black—as black as the black sateen under-*sulham* which he wore beneath his traveling garment; his nose was broad and flat, while Al-Lateef's was long and narrow. The shape of his jowls and the formation of his mouth were different. Even the color of the eyes seemed lighter because of the darkened skin; and instead of Al-Lateef's somewhat pointed beard, that of Sidi Ajuba was cut in crescent shape, to outline the lower half of his face. The disguise which had deceived the keenest eyes on past occasions would serve him in the present emergency.

As for the man who rode the mule toward El K'sar from the north, he bore little resemblance to Mohamed Ali. Across one eye and around his head beneath the hood of his *djellab* a broad white bandage stretched. From beside it one brown eye looked out somewhat blankly. A touch of *kohl* on the eyelid and in the hollow beneath the eye had given it a sunken look. Mohamed Ali's luxuriant and curling brown beard, as well as his mustache, was now coal-black. His clothing was not quite disreputable and the hands which held the reins were not quite clean. He was Aïsa the One-eyed, on his way to Fez to buy mules, and he looked precisely like a man who would make mule buying a business. And there was a distinct odor of the stables about him.

An X-ray photograph would have silhouetted, in his case as in the case of the rider from the Fez gate, beneath the concealing garments, two heavy pistols, a long curved knife, and many round disks packed together, which were coins in leather *shakarahs*. A slight difference in arrangement, however, for Al-Lateef wore his automatics in shoulder holsters, whereas Mohamed Ali bore his Colt pistols in leather holsters hidden by a broad cloth belt.

And so through that day Aïsa the One-eyed and Sidi Ajuba, the black magician, approached each other. The night they spent, each in his own fashion, with what accommodations were available at the point he had reached. Sidi Ajuba sought and received the hospitality of a small country village, but Aïsa spread his carpet and slept the sleep of the just beneath a wayside tree. The next morning's dawn saw them setting out again toward El K'sar; the following night saw them sleeping only a short ride from the town, and by midmorning of the third day, within an hour of each other, Ajuba passed beneath the shadow of the southern gate of El K'sar and Aïsa's mule clattered through the Bab-el-Tangier in the northern wall.

Within five minutes after Aïsa entered the city, mule and horse touched stirrups as they passed through the traffic in the marketplace. The riders courteously greeted each other.

"Peace be upon you, brother," said Aïsa the One-eyed.

"And upon you be peace," replied Sidi Ajuba.

They smiled at each other and continued their ways.

It was, therefore, nowise unusual that they should salute each other again, an hour later, when they found that they occupied adjoining stalls in the caravanserai. Or rather, that their steeds were to be neighbors while their masters should remain in El K'sar. These stalls were arranged about the marketplace. Some of them were used as shops for grain and fodder and whatnot, while

others were given up entirely to the stabling of animals.

Aïsa the One-eyed had just left his mule to be taken care of by a brown native boy and was turning away to seek food for himself when the black magician clattered up over the cobbles, preceded by a native youth. At the entrance to the stall he swung from the saddle and as the youth led his horse into the shelter, turned and saw the traveler with the bandaged eye.

"We meet again, Sidi Traveler," he said cordially. "It is well to rest a day on the road when the road is a long one."

"That is the truth," assented Aïsa. "To rest and to eat. I was about to seek food."

While the lips were speaking words, thoughts were flashing through the heads of both the speakers. In Sidi Ajuba's: This traveler comes from the north; perhaps from him I may be able to discover recent news concerning Mohamed Ali. In Aïsa's: This man comes from the south; he said the road was a long one. No doubt he comes from Fez. Perhaps there is news in Fez which I should know.

And the result of these thoughts was that Sidi Ajuba—forestalling the words which were already formulating on Aïsa's lips—said:

"I, too, have hunger. Let us then seek food together. Unless, by any chance—"

"No," said Aïsa quickly, "I have no other arrangements. Let us go together. There is a little café where the food is good and clean and, more important, plentiful. I could eat a sheep."

"And I at least two chickens, baked, with a *quintal* of *kesk'soo,*" replied Sidi Ajuba, laughing.

Side by side they slippered away, the supposed black man and the supposed one-eyed, in that amazing brotherhood of Islam which recognizes no color line save of the spirit. Thus Al-Lateef the Clever One rubbed shoulders with Mohamed Ali, the man whose head he sought; and Mohamed Ali laughed into the very face of him whose existence was deadly menace to himself. And neither knew.

THE native café of Mustapha, the Riffi, was down a narrow side street just beyond the gate of the marketplace, and a few minutes' walk brought Aïsa and Sidi Ajuba to its cool low entrance, from beyond which, in what, compared to the outside glare, seemed to be twilight darkness, came the faint strumming of a *gimbri* and a low voice chanting a tale from the "Thousand Nights and a Night", in rhythm to the pinging of the diminutive one stringed banjo. As they stood for a moment side by side upon the threshold, they saw a half dozen natives squatting about on the straw mattings, busily engaged in eating from more or less numerous bowls before them, and the big, dark figure of Mustapha-el-Riffi, surging to his feet from a corner, striding to greet them.

A quick exchange of native amenities followed, and very shortly the two travelers—the two man-hunters who sought each other—were squatting cross-legged with a small table, eight inches in height, between them, while Mustapha's voice was heard in a kitchen beyond a low partition giving orders for the immediate serving of various portions of *kesk'soo,* baked chickens, mutton, vegetables, tangerines and tea flavored and perfumed by a large spray of fresh mint sprigs.

And while their hungry stomachs thrilled hopefully to the promise of the feast to come, Aïsa and Sidi Ajuba took further stock of each other, each paving the road of small talk toward the broad highway of the more important information he desired to obtain.

"You seem," proffered Sidi Ajuba, "to be acquainted with this town. It is well for a traveler to know where good food may be obtained."

"Yes," assented Aïsa, "I know El K'sar somewhat well. For some years I have been in the business of buying and

selling mules. An occupation which takes me much about the country. The constant change of native officials in Tangier, you will understand, means a more or less constant demand for good mules."

The black magician nodded, grinned.

"Affairs in Tangier," he suggested, "might possibly be better conducted by the mules than by their masters."

Aïsa's eye twinkled.

"You are no stranger, I perceive, to our affairs. Although—" he hesitated—"you have recently used one or two words which are not common hereabouts, which led me to believe—" He paused politely, and the magician smiled inwardly at the successful usage of the words referred to.

"I come but recently from Timbuktu," he explained, "where I have been for some years. But Morocco is my native land—and officialdom is always the same."

"From Timbuktu!" exclaimed Aïsa. "A far cry from El K'sar-Kebir. Still—" he offered the suggestion with an air of abstraction, as though thinking to himself rather than addressing his companion—"there be valuable cargoes to be brought from Timbuktu. Feather plumes and ivory and gold, if I be not mistaken."

"But I have to do with none of these things," Ajuba told him. "Perhaps my name—" he paused to grin into Aïsa's single eye—"will tell you my profession. I am called Ajuba."

"That means the Wonderful," Aïsa said unnecessarily.

"My trade name, as it were," explained Ajuba. "Besides which, I am sometimes called Master of the Djinnoon."

"Oho!" exclaimed Aïsa. "That explains the black robe beneath your *djellab*. You are a magician."

"Even so," assented Ajuba. "Or at least so people call me."

He made no pretense of trying to impress his companion with the mysticism of his profession. Mule traders are a hard boiled lot. Ajuba felt that the man across the table from him was not one to be amazed by those tricks which caused the ignorant to look upon him with quivering awe. Just why he felt thus he could not explain, beyond the fact that his companion possessed a poise of body, voice and mind which marked him as above average intelligence. He continued his pursuit of information, thrusting his words more directly at his objective.

"For some little while I have been in Fez, but now go to Tangier. I am told, however, that matters are not peaceful there. Perhaps—perhaps you have come from that direction and so can tell me of conditions?"

Aïsa nodded.

"I do indeed come but now from Tangier, on my way to Fez. We change places, as it were. As for Tangier, it is somewhat disturbed. The basha, one Mohamed Ali, was about to lose his post at the Sultan's orders—was, I believe, to be arrested, deprived of his properties, and all the rest of it—wherefore he fled with his followers to his *casbah* at Zinat, and there defies the Sultan to take him. But no doubt that news is already commonly known in Fez."

Sidi Ajuba nodded.

"That is practically as the report is current on the streets of Fez," he said. "It seems to me—I can not be certain—but it seems to me that the name of this basha, Mohamed Ali, has reached even to Timbuktu. Was he not the man who held an American for ransom not so long ago?"

"Not precisely for ransom, I understand," explained Aïsa, "but as a hostage to force the Sultan to correct an injustice. Then, as he seeks to do now, the Sultan sought to deprive this Mohamed Ali of his honors and estate and power. Mohamed Ali objected."

"I see," said the magician, nodding. "This Mohamed Ali must be a bold fellow—a man with more than ordinary bravery and intelligence. I have never seen him. I should not, I think, care to cross swords with him."

Aïsa grinned and his good eye flickered.

"Oh, I am not so sure," he said, "that he is much out of the ordinary. A lucky stroke or two gives a man a reputation and thereafter everything he does appears to be phenomenal. Probably this Mohamed Ali, basha though he has been, is no better than many others. Myself, for example."

Sidi Ajuba smiled at the naïveté of his big companion, and yet was wise enough in the ways of the world to realize that there was a grain of truth in what Aïsa said. A trick of fate could elevate a man of mediocre ability and make him a marvel thereafter in the eyes of his fellowmen.

"But I think he must have something most men have not," he objected. "Those I have heard speak of him either greatly admire or greatly fear him. An unusual man, I feel certain."

This came from the heart, for Sidi Ajuba, otherwise Al-Lateef the Clever One, had lost, during his journey from Fez, no particle of his respect for the fighting ability of Mohamed Ali; no whit of his reluctance to bring himself into conflict with that bold personage.

"I have heard no one mentioned as a worthy opponent for him."

"Hmph!" The sound was almost a snort. "*I* have heard," offered Aïsa, "of one whom I think even Mohamed Ali would consider with respect. Assuredly you have heard of him as well?"

"And who is that one?" questioned the magician.

Before Aïsa could answer, Mustapha appeared, followed by a serving man staggering beneath the weight of a huge brass tray bearing their meal. But after this was placed upon the table between them, securing the approval of nodding heads and spoken words, and Mustapha had withdrawn—

"*Bismillah!*" said Aïsa, and "*Bismillah!*" echoed Sidi Ajuba, as both plunged brown fingers into the big bowl of *kesk'soo* in the center of the tray. "That one is known as Al-Lateef the Clever One; now, I am told, chief of the Sultan's secret service—a man who is stranger to my eyes, yet one my ears know well."

Sidi Ajuba had some difficulty in swallowing the *kesk-soo* which his accustomed hand had tossed into the form of a ball the size of a walnut previous to being shot by his thumb into an open mouth. So it was already known that Al-Lateef now headed the secret service. *Y'allah!* It was supposed to be a secret. How in the name of Allah had it become the gossip of the marketplaces and the open road? None of his innumerable *djinnoon* whispered into his ear that beneath the belt of his fellow-diner was a hastily written message conveying that very information—and the additional knowledge that Al-Lateef had been commanded to capture Mohamed Ali, dead or alive. But he concealed the surprise that his companion's words had given him, shrugged, and accepted Aïsa's statement at its apparent value.

"Al-Lateef?" he questioned. "The Clever One? The name I have heard. Why does he bear the title of Clever One?"

"But remain in this country some months and assuredly you shall learn," affirmed Aïsa. "In the past year the tale of his exploits has gone up and down the land. It was he who killed a certain basha by riding into his house in the bridal box of a new wife the basha was adding to his harem. It was he who rescued the person and property of another basha from the prison of Fez. He rescued his younger brother from the palace and the lions of the basha of Tangier, and gave the basha to the lions for a meal.

"He—but the tale is long. And now from outlaw he has become chief of the secret service. The reason for this change is a mystery. One says it was for having saved the Sultan's life. Another, for having saved the life of the Sultan's favorite son. And yet another that with his supreme cleverness he

caught his Majesty in a trap from which the only escape was to grant his demands. I know not. Sufficient that he is one who possesses what most men lack. Aye, he is a man whom I think Mohamed Ali has reason to fear."

For a little space thereafter each ate in silence. Sidi Ajuba was digesting with no little surprise and some incredulity this unexpected eulogy from one of his fellow-countrymen, and Aïsa the One-eyed was absorbed with consideration of his own position with respect to the man whom he had praised.

"And Mohamed Ali," the magician broke the silence, "you say he is at Zinat?"

Aïsa masticated and swallowed a mouthful of baked chicken before he replied.

"He was," he said then, "at Zinat. But there is a rumor on the road that he has gone away for a time. One told me that he had gone to El Arache; another that he had gone even to Fez. But these rumors of the road—"

"But—but why would he go to Fez in the present circumstances?"

"Allah knows," returned Aïsa. "Perhaps—" he laughed—"perhaps to pay his respects to Al-Lateef." Sidi Ajuba joined in the laughter.

"That would be excellent!" he exclaimed, rocking. "Excellent indeed. But how unfortunate if, after making the long journey, he should find that Al-Lateef had gone to pay his respects to him at Zinat."

There was a sudden break in Aïsa's laughter. A break which he was quick to explain by a cough to dislodge some imaginary food stuck in his throat. He cast a quick look at his companion, then forced another laugh.

"A double joke that," he cried. "A jest for the gods! But—but—is there any rumor in Fez that Al-Lateef has done that thing?"

"No more than rumor of the marketplace and court," Sidi Ajuba told him, and his laughter too had died down.

The rumors in Fez being correct—might not the rumors of the northern road be equally correct? Was he traveling to Zinat to discover Mohamed Ali, while Mohamed Ali was traveling to Fez to discover him? *Allah kerim!* That would be a joke on them both.

Behind the eye of Aïsa a similar thought formulated itself. And another one: If Al-Lateef had started out to find him as quickly as he had started out to find Al-Lateef, then truly the Clever One was a foeman worthy of his steel. A man to fear, an opponent to respect, to be cautious with. Or amazingly bold.

Thoughtful silences marked the rest of the meal, and when it was finished and they rose to go, both had determined upon a similar course. Sidi Ajuba intended to make inquiries to ascertain, if possible, whether Mohamed Ali had passed through El K'sar on his way to Fez. And Aïsa was bent upon ascertaining whether Al-Lateef the Clever One had passed through in the other direction.

THUS Al-Lateef, who was Sidi Ajuba, spent the hot afternoon seeking news of Mohamed Ali, and Mohamed Ali, who was Aïsa, poked about likewise in search of information concerning Al-Lateef. In the course of their journeyings they passed each other more than once, exchanged greetings and slippered on, each thinking that the other was a most agreeable fellow. And then the gods in their glee thunderbolted another factor into this comedy of ignorance.

It was a bolt as unexpected to the citizens of El-K'sar as it was to the two strong men who so diligently sought each other. More, it was one of those sudden and irrational events which seem to be ordained by higher powers merely to attain some ends of their own. It is possible to suspect that the divine motive in the present instance was to protect two men for whom Allah had more than ordinary affection, let us say, for assuredly He must be grateful for strong men,

men who do not pester Him with prayers for aid or annoy His ears with continuous reproach.

Howsoever that may be, the small tribe of Beni Rehun—a semi-Berber tribe occupying the rugged hills a score of miles east of El K'sar—suddenly became violent through the hypnotic exhortations of a thoroughly insane holy man, rose two hundred strong and set forth, the lunatic in the lead, with the pious intention of capturing and looting the town of El K'sar.

The first warning which the citizens had of the approaching raiders came from the gasping mouth of a Jew, who operated a small farm a few miles outside the town, and whose panic driven feet had just managed to keep one leap ahead of the Beni Rehun bullets. According to the Jew's tale, shrilled brokenly to the amazed ears first of the guards at the eastern gate and immediately thereafter to those of the captain of the city guards, all of the mountain Berbers, numbering several million, were on their way down from the mountains to sweep Moorish civilization off the map, reestablish a Berber dynasty and again enslave the Jews.

It was the old story and the old menace—for once every few centuries the Berbers had done that very thing. Thus there was no reason why they could not do it again.

But the captain of the guards was a phlegmatic person, become so, no doubt, through the necessity of discounting anywhere from fifty to a hundred per cent the tales of threat, injury and menace poured into his ears each day. Especially by the Jews, who had a most marvelous genius for converting the ordinary into the extraordinary, the little into the big, the shaken fist into the given blow—and who lived in constant fear of attack by neighboring tribes or wandering groups of soldiers out of hand.

The Jew, Bin Ibrahim, told his tale thrice, and each time it grew like a balloon being filled with gas. Wherefore the captain of the guards laughed scornfully, asked the Jew if he had been smoking *keef* and told one of his soldiers to mount a horse, ride to the Jew's place and arrest the man who had been molesting him. Grinning broadly, the *makhazni* galloped over the hills, and in something less than a quarter of an hour he came galloping back, bent low over the saddle, the smile completely gone.

From behind him came the plop-plop of rifles to encourage him onward. By the time he had reported to the captain of the guards, and the captain had ordered his men called for defense, the eastern gate was jammed with a torrent of bareheaded, brown riders firing their rifles into the air and shrieking death and destruction to the inhabitants of El K'sar.

Five minutes later, led by the bellowing holy man, they surged into the marketplace. The women and children fled shrieking into the bystreets, but the hundred or so countrymen and shopkeepers who were in the *sok* leaped swiftly to the defense of their lives and properties. They were not, most of them, the soft pale city-dwellers, but rough countrymen in for a day's trading. And although it was forbidden for them to bring guns into the town, every one of them carried a rifle slung over his shoulders beneath his brown *djellab*.

Thus in an amazingly short time the *sok* changed from a scene of amicable, though noisy, buying and selling, to a battleground, a pandemonium of shouts and shrieks and rifle bullets, leaping horses and racing men. The invaders had entered from the east and thus naturally the defenders had gathered at the western end of the *sok*. Behind them, cutting off retreat, was a gateless wall.

Sidi Ajuba, who had been squatting in the shop of a pottery seller when the war began, found himself now in the midst of the defenders of the marketplace. He did not, of course, know what it was all about, hesitated to participate

in the fight—until he saw one of the attacking horsemen raise his rifle to shoot down a woman trying to find safety. Without further consideration of the cause of the uprising, his hands suddenly held two heavy automatic pistols. One of them spoke and the woman killer flung his arms heavenward and toppled from his prancing horse.

"A good shot, my friend. An excellent shot," a voice said in Ajuba's ears and, turning his head, he saw the smiling face of Aïsa the One-eyed.

"What is the cause of the disturbance—and who are the attackers?" he asked Aïsa.

"They are the Beni Rehuns," replied Aïsa, shouting to make himself heard. "I recognize their crazy holy man—and certain others. A raid, no doubt. And consequently we must protect ourselves."

His hands sought his belt and drew forth his pistols. Al-Lateef noted that they were two fine guns, Colts, and was momentarily surprised to find the guns fall easily into the hands of this amiable and apparently peaceful mule trader. But there was no time now for thought along this line. The defenders of the marketplace were outnumbered two to one, and the enemy was getting closer. Bullets whistled past their ears and thundered into the wall behind them.

"A hot place and apt to grow hotter," shouted Aïsa. "Half the rifles are useless."

Sidi Ajuba glanced quickly around, saw the truth of Aïsa's statement. The defenders were so pressed together that half of them could not get their rifles into action. He turned to Aïsa, waited a moment while that one took aim and let three shots fly into the ranks of the attackers, then:

"We shall be killed like sheep if we remain here," he shouted. "We must charge."

"Right," agreed Aïsa. "Let us go."

He turned to the crowd massed behind him, shouted to them to follow, and then, Sidi Ajuba at his side, their four guns roaring, he leaped forward toward the enemy. Behind them, with a wild cry, surged the men of the marketplace, dashing forward to engage now in hand-to-hand struggle with those who would slay them—raced past their two leaders and threw themselves upon the Beni Rehuns nearest to hand.

Some fell and were trampled by the horses, some reached up to pull riders from their saddles, hurled them to the ground and ended them with knife thrusts. Aïsa and Sidi Ajuba paused for a moment side by side to reload their pistols. Into his two automatics Sidi Ajuba slipped fresh clips of cartridges. The thing was done in a moment and then he looked at Aïsa and perceived that he was still engaged in inserting cartridges into his revolvers. When Aïsa had finished, Sidi Ajuba proffered one of his own automatics.

"You are at a disadvantage, my friend," he said. "Let us make things equal. Do you take one of these. Let me have one of your revolvers. And here are spare clips."

Aïsa hesitated a moment, cast a quick, odd look at Sidi Ajuba, but accepted the offer. If Ajuba had been a bit surprised to see the brace of guns flash so accustomedly to Aïsa's hands, so Aïsa was now surprised at the abrupt metamorphosis of the peaceful traveling magician into an accomplished gun fighter, cool and collected in the midst of battle. But he had no more time than Sidi Ajuba to consider the implication of this.

Again side by side they moved forward, aiming, firing, making every shot count. Thus they worked their way to a little rise of ground in the center of the marketplace and there, back to back, they continued their firing. But suddenly—

"Look! By Allah, look!" shouted Aïsa. "They run! The cowards run!"

Sidi Ajuba looked where Aïsa pointed with a gun, and saw that the defenders of the marketplace on that side had turned and were madly trying to escape.

"It appears, my friends," replied the magician, "that you and I must drive the Beni Rehuns out. Quick! Fill your guns again and follow me!"

"Allah! What a man!" breathed Aïsa as he made haste to reload. And then, "Ready," he flung over his shoulder.

Straight at the head of the column which was now pushing the defenders into a corner Sidi Ajuba raced, guns banging, and at his heels the mule trader, his eye bandage like the white plume of Navarre. Approaching at a diagonal, they caught the attackers in the rear, and under their swift but careful fire a dozen horsemen fell before they sensed their danger. They turned then and saw the two men from whose guns death had been spurting. They shouted madly and spurred their horses toward the twain, to be met with further deadly fire that stopped them, drove them back. But now two score more of the Beni Rehun, who had been at the other side of the marketplace, came roaring up.

"Surrounded!" shouted Sidi Ajuba in Aïsa's ear.

Aïsa nodded, took careful aim at a man whose rifle was bearing upon his heart, and brought him down.

"My guns are empty!" he cried.

"Reload while I guard you," said Ajuba and, his own back exposed to the enemies' fire behind him, he guarded his companion while Aïsa filled the chambers of his guns.

But the mantle of Allah's protection was about him, and no bullet found its way into his back.

"Ready again," cried Aïsa, and raised his pistols. And then, "Allah!"

He fell back against Sidi Ajuba, one hand holding its pistol darting to his head, where blood spurted above his eye.

Swiftly Ajuba passed one arm around him, supporting him. Through his mind flashed the thought:

"This is the end. This is death. Who would have thought it would be in the marketplace of El K'sar?"

He felt a sudden shock as a bullet caught him in the shoulder. A man sprang toward them, knife in hand. Aïsa recoiled before it. Sidi Ajuba was suddenly dizzy. His knees weakened. Fight against it as he would, he sank to the ground; realized that his companion, Aïsa, had fallen, also. Saw the man with the knife raise it to plunge it into his heart. Felt a movement of Aïsa's arms, heard the crack of a pistol, saw the man with the knife fall backward. Then Aïsa got to his knees, guns busy again, and by their swift fire drove the encroaching circle backward.

The dizziness left Ajuba. He sat up, got to his knees. But it was death. That he knew. Both injured, they could no longer hold off the attacking horde. He felt under some odd necessity of saying a word to Aïsa—to this mule trader whom some jest of fate had caused to be his companion in death.

And, as if motivated by the same emotion, Aïsa turned to look at Sidi Ajuba. For a moment their eyes held each other—but no word was spoken. That look told all that they would say, all they could not say. And then a surprising thing happened. Aïsa, the mule trader, rose slowly, ponderously, with an obvious effort, to his feet. Raised his big body and took a deep breath. Then he bent and drew Sidi Ajuba erect.

"Thus," he said. "Thus."

He flung his now empty pistols into the faces of his opponents, his hand flashed to his belt and brought out the long, curved knife which had hung there.

"*Allah akbar!*" he shouted and lunged unsteadily forward.

Ajuba sank to earth at his feet.

And then the air was rent by an explosion which shook the earth. A great shouting followed, and another explosion. Men poured in through the gates and over the wall—the city soldiers that the captain of the guards had at last put into action. Sidi Ajuba was conscious of this, was conscious of the fact that his fellow traveler, Aïsa, stood swaying on his feet, knife in hand, cursing the Beni Rehun; that the men thus

cursed suddenly turned and raced madly for the eastern gate. And then blackness swallowed him.

THE wounds of Sidi Ajuba and Aïsa the One-eyed were of the sort which are temporarily paralyzing, weakening to both body and spirit—hence their collapse in the marketplace just before the timely arrival of the city troops which put to flight the raiders; but they were not serious, and when they had received such treatment as their bearers considered to be necessary, the two men, at Aïsa's suggestion, made their way to the house of Mustapha el-Riffi.

"I," said Aïsa, who now bore another bandage around his head to cover the spot where the rifle bullet had furrowed it, "feel no inclination to resume my journey to Fez with undue haste. A day or two in the house of my friend, Mustapha . . . Hand-to-hand battles are tiring."

"My own thought," assented Sidi Ajuba, thinking, however, that if the bullet which had carved his companion's headpiece had gone half an inch deeper, Mustapha el-Riffi would have lost a friend.

As for himself, he knew that his left shoulder, cut deep by a jacketed bullet, would give him an extremely sore body for some days to come.

And so these two enemies slippered their way in friendship and mutual admiration into the low doorway of Mustapha's house and there found rooms for their occupation. These rooms were side by side, with a large, uncovered doorway between them, and from where he sat or lay upon his floor cushions in the corner of the room, Sidi Ajuba could look through the doorway and watch and speak with his companion in the recent fight.

What a man he was, that big, brown mule trader, whose single eye above a pistol sight was quite sufficient for all purposes! How he had thrown his empty pistols into the faces of his enemies and had stood, swaying like an elephant, knife in hand, waiting for them to attack—because he himself no longer could move forward. Stood there defending to the last valiant effort of will Sidi Ajuba, his friend, helpless for the moment at his feet. A man indeed!

A man to whom he, Al-Lateef, indubitably owed his life. In him, as in every Moor under similar conditions, there welled that paining sense of gratitude which formulated itself in the silent vow that he would do to the other as the other had done to him—that when Sidi Aïsa, the mule trader, needed a friend, the chief of the Sultan's secret service would be with him hand and heart and mind.

It was characteristic of Al-Lateef that he failed to perceive the part that he himself had played in the destiny of his companion. But Mohamed Ali, grinning at his fellow-warrior through the doorway, was making up for his friend's lack of egotism. The same emotion stirred the big man's heart to its very depths, and he, too, swore by the ninety-nine sacred names of Allah that Sidi Ajuba, the black magician from Timbuktu, would come into power and riches and honors, when he, Mohamed Ali, should regain that place in Moroccan affairs which he had held before—which he would hold again, *inshallah*—if God willed.

Aye, by heaven, even though it involved the sacrifice of some of his independence, the giving up of his revenge against certain of his enemies, even the humbling of himself before the mighty in order that power to aid his friend might be regained, he would do even that.

And so the two strong men sat upon their cushions and, unknown to each other, exchanged blessing vibrations of their spirits. The purposes which had brought them to El K'sar were now somewhat far off. Eventually, of course, thought Al-Lateef—and eventually, of course, thought Mohamed Ali—they would go about the business which had

brought them here. Mohamed Ali to Fez to find and capture or to slay the one man whom he recognized as his greatest menace. Al-Lateef to Zinat, there, through his magical ability, to gain entrance into the citadel, to entertain the soldiers and civilians with his mysteries, to make for himself a place in which he could await the return of Mohamed Ali, and plan for the downfall of that one.

Thus the night came and passed, and a new day rose from the east with its glory and its surprises. The gods who had stage-managed the comedy thus far, overnight invented another jest, the climax which all good comedies must have.

Came midmorning, and Aïsa hoisted himself to his feet and went forth to put strength in his legs, as he expressed it. He invited Sidi Ajuba to accompany him, but the magician's shoulder was aching as though ten thousand little red hot devils were dancing in it, and he saw no worth in the suggestion. Wherefore Aïsa lumbered out alone.

Shortly came Mustapha el-Riffi, bearing fresh coffee and fruits for the delectation of the black magician. He set them in place, said a kindly word and turned toward the doorway when Ajuba, thinking to please him by pleasant reference to Aïsa, whom he now knew to be a somewhat intimate friend, said:

"Your friend, Aïsa, is a remarkable man, Mustapha. Allah, how he fought there in the marketplace. To him I owe my life. And I am grateful indeed that Allah's hand turned away the bullet from his brain. As it is, Aïsa will be quickly recovered."

Mustapha laughed gleefully.

"A great man indeed," he assented. "You have said it. And a good friend to me. My thanks go with yours to Allah in the business of the bullet. Already the wound is healing. It would take more than that to conquer Mohamed A——" his big lips snapped together and a look of fear jumped into his eyes.

Sidi Ajuba could not help hearing, could not help seeing, and he too jumped inwardly; but instantly that brain, which had kept his head upon his shoulders, leaped into defensive action. He smiled into the fear struck face as though he had noted nothing.

"Mohamed Aïsa?" he questioned. "I did not know your friend's other names —only Aïsa."

Relief surged like a flood into the good Mustapha's face, but he was still shaking inwardly and made haste to get away, pleading cooking pots on the fires. And when he had gone, and the inward censor with him, the mind of Sidi Ajuba leaped swiftly at the hidden thing. The truth crashed down upon him as a bursting roof might crash inward.

Mohamed Ali! Sidi Aïsa the One-eyed was Mohamed Ali! It was as plain as the straw matting on the floor. Mule traders do not carry fine Colt pistols in their belts. Mule traders do not become leaders of men in battle. Mule traders do not stand swaying like elephants awaiting the charge of a score of killers, knife in hand, defending with their last atom of physical energy the man who chanced to be thrown by fate beside them in a fight. But all these were things that Mohamed Ali inevitably would do—unless all the legend of Mohamed Ali was a lie. Mohamed Ali was big and brown and so was Sidi Aïsa.

True, Aïsa had but one eye—no, Aïsa wore a bandage over one eye. But Sidi Ajuba had not the slightest doubt—now —that that bandage covered a perfectly good orb. The thing was certain: Aïsa the mule trader was Mohamed Ali, the man he sought, the man whose capture or death he had been royally commanded to accomplish. The man who had saved his life in the marketplace.

Al-Lateef wrapped himself in his *djellab*, stretched upon his cushion and, face to the wall, studied the matter. Or, to be more specific, he let his mind run free, mixing tragedy and comedy as it would. His was too keen a brain to

ignore the element of humor in the situation. Even though a sort of tragedy encompassed it. It should be said for him that minutes passed before his duty managed to attract his consciousness. And then only to be coolly rebuffed.

The fact that Sidi Aïsa was Mohamed Ali changed in no wise the feeling which Al-Lateef had for Sidi Aïsa, could not change it. To Aïsa, whoever he might be in reality, Al-Lateef owed and recognized a debt of gratitude which must be repaid. Duty was easily dismissed; nothing on earth should force him, could force him, at the moment to play any tricks upon his benefactor. If it should by any wild chance reach the ears of his Majesty the Sultan that Al-Lateef had had opportunity to capture Mohamed Ali and had ignored that opportunity—the Sultan could do as he would with Al-Lateef.

Gradually the problem raised by Mustapha's unintentional revelation, and Al-Lateef's own deductions, found a solution. The only thing he would do, Al-Lateef decided, was to let Aïsa remain in total ignorance of his discovery of his identity, to bid him farewell on the morrow as though he were Aïsa, the mule trader, proven friend and nothing more.

And reaching this decision as to his course of action, Al-Lateef's mind turned once more with a sigh of relief to an amused consideration of the comedy element.

UNFORTUNATELY for his amusement, Al-Lateef did not know the full extent of the comedy.

Aïsa the mule trader, having lumbered forth from the house of Mustapha, sought out an ancient friend who conducted a little cobbler shop in the Street of the Leather-Workers, and who was part of Mohamed Ali's own secret information service, as well as a postmaster for such messages as should be left with him for his friend. The old man looked up from a slipper he was cobbling, squinted at the man who stood before him, considered the bandage across that man's eyes and said—

"Hmph! Aïsa or Mohamed?"

Mohamed Ali stepped across the low doorsill and squatted cross legged behind the cobbler, where he would be safe from passing curiosity.

"Mohamed," he said.

"I thought so," said the cobbler. "I heard of you in yesterday's fighting. Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Immensely," said Mohamed Ali. "I had a *man* beside me."

And he proceeded to tell his cobbler friend and confidant of the valiant fighting of the black magician from Timbuktu. When he had finished:

"Hmph!" snorted the cobbler again. He fished in his belt and brought forth a letter. "This is from our friend, Kaid Dukali at Fez. I think it will interest you," he added dryly, and pounded with a hammer upon the slipper sole.

Mohamed Ali took the letter, which he noted was addressed to the cobbler, and read the Arabic lettering. As he did so his face changed from inquiry to the frown of curiosity, to a startled dismay. For the letter from Kaid Dukali, secret friend of Mohamed Ali in the court of the Sultan, to Hassan the cobbler, told of the appointment of a new chief of the secret service, Al-Lateef the Clever One. Then it related briefly a story of the solving of the problem offered by the murder of a French interpreter by this same Al-Lateef, disguised as a black magician from Timbuktu.

There was more to the letter, but it fluttered from Mohamed Ali's amazed hands. The cobbler ceased his hammering and cocked a sarcastic eye at his friend. Mohamed Ali's face was so ludicrous that the cobbler threw up his arms and roared with laughter.

"But—but—" stammered Mohamed Ali. "This is, this is a serious business. Allah! What a fool I have been. What a fool to think that a black magician is a better man in battle than I am. What a fool—"

And then the irresistible humor of

the situation fell upon him, and he rocked his huge body back and forth, while his great laugh shook the cobbler's cubbyhole and made people in the narrow street turn to see what was happening. He laughed until the tears ran down his bearded cheeks—from *both* eyes—hugging himself with his big arms and rocking back and forth in an ecstasy of amusement. From time to time gasped phrases reached the attentive ear of the cobbler.

"I sought him . . . He sought me . . . We became friends . . . Fight all over—at the marketplace. Go to recuperate in the same house . . . Oh, Allah! It is too much—too much!"

But gradually the laughter wore off and amusement gave way to a calmer consideration of what this revelation meant. One thing was certain; his mission was at an end for the present. There was no taking of the head or person of this man who had fought beside him in the *sok* against terrific odds, who had traded guns with him so that the odds would be equal, whose pistols had indubitably saved the life of Mohamed Ali.

This he told to the ancient cobbler who snorted with glee at his friend's predicament, and sarcastically suggested that Mohamed Ali was yet too young to be out alone on the highways. But he saw the outlaw's point of view—in fact it was the point of view which he himself had reached after he had read Dukali's letter. His old ears were attuned to public gossip, and his shop was the receptacle for all of it that passed about the town. Hence he knew perfectly well what had happened in the marketplace, knew perfectly well what would follow. And he himself had made no effort to communicate his recently acquired news to Mohamed Ali.

And before he left the cobbler's shop, Mohamed Ali had reached the same conclusion which Al-Lateef, lying upon his pallet in the house of Mustapha el-Riffi, had reached about the same time. The black magician must never know that he, Aïsa, the mule driver, had penetrated his disguise, knew him for Al-Lateef, chief of the Sultan's secret service instead of Sidi Ajuba, the black magician from Timbuktu. Sidi Ajuba was his friend—had proved it at risk of his own life—and friendship to Mohamed Ali meant something. Al-Lateef must not know. He must not be chagrined and wounded of spirit by the knowledge that the man he sought was Aïsa the mule trader.

But still more than this, Al-Lateef, as chief of the Sultan's secret service, had a duty to his ruler and to his country, which he should not, must not, abandon for the sake of friendship. No, Mohamed Ali would go his way and Al-Lateef should go his; the chief of the secret service should never know that he had been in contact with the man he was sworn to capture or to kill. Between Aïsa the mule trader and the black magician should be the memory of a dangerous moment and a swift and profound friendship.

But between Mohamed Ali and Al-Lateef, the situation should be—so far as Al-Lateef was concerned—precisely as it was before they had met. He must be permitted to try to carry out the command of the Sultan, the command of his own conscience—which was to find Mohamed Ali and capture him, dead or alive.

Of course henceforth there was no question of his, Mohamed Ali's, trying to eliminate Al-Lateef, thus putting an end to much of the danger which menaced himself. The chief of the secret service would still hunt the Sultan's enemy with death in his hands; but that enemy no longer could fight back—because of that which had happened in the marketplace of El K'sar. Henceforth he could only avoid the man upon his trail, or protect himself against Al-Lateef by outwitting him. Even this, Mohamed Ali felt to be a distasteful violation of ethics. But his problem was a difficult one, and he really desired to retain his head.

THUS it came about that later in the day, when Mohamed Ali returned to the house of Mustapha el-Riffi, having in mind the precise wording of an imaginary message which had summoned him back instantly to Tangier, he found a saddled horse at the mounting block, stuffed saddle bags on its rump, and Sidi Ajuba squatted in the shade of the house.

As he slippered up, the magician rose and came toward him holding out his hand.

"My friend Aïsa," said the magician, "I am pleased that you have returned so early in the day." He forced himself to meet the eye of the pseudo mule trainer, and gripped his hand with an earnestness in which there was no evasion. But he made his voice tell an untruth to his friend. "Only an hour ago," he said, "I learned news which takes me from El K'sar instantly. I must go at once, not to Tangier as I had planned, but to El Arache. A friend lies very ill and has sent for me. Wherefore I say to you, *selaama,* and may the peace of Allah rest upon you and may the mantle of His protection be about you."

Wherefore, Sidi Aïsa's imaginary summons was not needed, but this did not change his intention of departing from El K'sar at once, to return to his fortress at Zinat.

"I, too," he said, "shall take the road today. To Tangier I go. But your shoulder—will the journey not injure it still further?"

"It is nothing," averred the magician. "Some pain, of course—but nothing which can not be borne. It will soon heal."

They unclasped hands and each turned away as though in embarrassment at the regret of their parting. The black magician swung into his saddle, turned to say another farewell word to Mustapha, who stood in his doorway, then swerved his horse around to face Aïsa.

"Until we meet again," he said, raising a hand in salutation.

The big mule trader returned the gesture and nodded. Al-Lateef clattered away down the cobbled street toward the El Arache gate.

Mohamed Ali strode toward the doorway where Mustapha stood. It was on the tip of the latter's tongue to confess to his friend his error in the presence of the black magician. But, he thought, the slip had passed unobserved. Therefore why disturb Mohamed Ali by telling him of it—and why lay himself open to censure when no evil had been intended or accomplished? Wherefore he kept silence on that matter. And that was another jest of the gods, as was eventually to be proven.

An hour later Aïsa the mule trader rode through the Tangier gate of El K'sar northward—northward to the fortress of Zinat, where he should again be Mohamed Ali the outlaw. But Mohamed Ali deprived now of the right to injure the man who, he knew, would still be upon his trail in obedience to majesty's commands.

Beyond the gates he mounted a little rise, reining his mule to a standstill. He gazed westward across the plain where the sun raised waves of water-like heat toward a gray Atlantic that he could not see.

Far, far in the distance he saw a horseman creeping along like a tiny insect. That, he thought, would be the black magician. And suddenly through the gray mist of regret flashed the sunshine of Mohamed Ali's humor. His great laugh boomed across the plains and caused his mule to look around in startled question. Mohamed Ali leaned forward to pat the curving neck.

"Sidi Ajuba the black magician from Timbuktu!" he exclaimed. "And Aïsa the mule trader!" Again his laughter boomed out.

Then he touched his mule with his slipper heel and resumed his jogging along the trail which destiny had marked out for him.

The West Indian Old-Timer

By CHARLES A. FREEMAN

USUALLY the American old-timer found in the West Indies was deposited there by the receding waves of the war with Spain, and its aftermath. Discharged from the Army, the former soldier often married one of the charming señoritas who had attracted him in the days of his service and settled down to earn a living in the new land.

In the majority of cases, and I speak particularly of Porto Rico, the transplanted American has done well. His particular lines of endeavor were the mechanical work of the sugar mills, road construction, general contracting, fruit cultivation and the operation of railroads. Through his efforts much has been accomplished in Uncle Sam's slice of the West Indian conquest of '98.

Cuban opportunities were slightly different. On the founding of the Republic, not a few Americans relinquished their citizenship in order to enter the government services. Today they are to be found in the Cuban army, in the national police, and other branches. Those who retained their citizenship are occupied in pursuits similar to those of their comrades in Porto Rico. In almost every case they have married Cuban women, but are educating their children Back Home.

The old-timer throughout the West Indies is quiet and unassuming. Often he resides in rural districts, but he reads American publications and keeps in touch with the world. If in Cuba, he comes to Havana at least once a year, and makes the rounds of the cafés and shops.

He lounges in the plazas and chats with tourists; strolls down the Prado to the Malecon drive where he gazes out over the blue waters of the Gulf toward Key West. The distance is only a scant ninety miles, yet he has but little desire to traverse it. His customs have become those of Cuba, and Spanish is as much his language as English. Usually he has a multitude of Cuban friends, some of whom he first met during the Santiago campaign or in reconstruction days when the new nation was placed on its feet by Uncle Sam.

Across in Haiti are a few of the tribe, but the Black Republic had little to offer until American intervention. Over the mountains however, in the gallant Dominican Republic, now struggling to an honorable position among the nations of the world, with her record of bloodshed and revolution pushed back into the limbo of the past, plenty of the old-timer stamp are to be found.

They are engaged largely in mundane agricultural pursuits. Like the Americans of their kind in Cuba, they come to the capital each year, usually at the close of the *zafra*, or sugar season, and foregather with their countrymen. Age has brought wisdom to them and they no longer show any disposition to take barrooms apart to see how they are operated. Quiet and sedate, with wide Stetsons pulled down over their eyes to shut out the glare of the sun, they down their jolts of white Dominican rum and talk of the days when a man was not considered dressed unless a .45 swung at his hip, and perhaps a derringer concealed in his sleeve.

The Virgin Islands are like Haiti—too black to attract old-timer settlers, or even fundless tourists of middle age. They have practically none of the type. Cuba and Porto Rico are their real habitat and will continue to be until the breed dies.

A Novel of the South Seas

FLENCHER PERUVIO, master of the brigantine *Scorpion,* showed intense interest when Peter Rowles told him he was a botanist and desired to go to the Island of Penrhyn for specimens. Peruvio agreed to give him passage. But a little later Peter regretted his bargain, after watching Peruvio and a giant of a man named Yule fight over Flamette, Peruvio's drinking companion in the Suva groggery. Peruvio ruthlessly broke Yule's arm and tossed him over a balcony.

Aboard the *Scorpion,* Peter became aware of an air of brooding mystery. Peruvio spent most of his time working on a jigsaw puzzle; the men went about their duties in silence.

One day Peter talked to Gytha Crosbie, a fellow-passenger on this strange ship. She told him she was bound for Tahiti—miles out of the course for Penrhyn—and Peter became alarmed. He went to Peruvio for a showdown, and was beaten into unconsciousness for his pains. When he regained his senses he found himself relegated to the forecastle.

Jovial Jinks, the steward, then took Peter into his confidence. He told him that Peruvio had a rich treasure the men planned to loot as soon as they learned its whereabouts. The jigsaw puzzle was believed to be a map to the treasure trove. The black cook, Naka, was dumb because Peruvio had cut his tongue out.

One night the *Scorpion* put in to an island. Peruvio led a party ashore in a quick raid on the natives, capturing some fifty of them. Jinks told Peter these were to be enslaved on Peruvio's mysterious island, which he planned to make into a modern Eden.

Now overmanned, the *Scorpion's* water ran low. The seamen mutinied, but

Continuing

FLENCHER'S ISLAND

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

were quelled at the point of a gun by Peruvio. He brought his slaves on deck, locked the sailors below and ran for a large island lifting over the horizon.

With all sails set he steered for a coral reef. Just before the ship struck, Peter realized with horror that he planned to rip out the *Scorpion's* bottom, thus ridding himself of the the mutinous seamen imprisoned below. However, Jinks managed to free the men and, as the ship went on the reef, the rebellious sailors tumbled ashore in a body and made off into the bush. Jinks, Peter saw, had Peruvio's jigsaw puzzle.

Safely on the beach of Flencher's Island, Peter found Gytha and Peruvio already ashore, as well as Maxon, the mate. Curtly ordering Peter and Maxon to set the natives to work salvaging the farming implements and tools with which the beached *Scorpion* was loaded, Peruvio told Gytha to follow him. Peter watched the pair out of sight, a storm gathering behind his eyes.

"What's that devil up to now?" he said to Maxon.

The mate laughed shortly.

"That's for you to stew about," he returned. "What I'm worried about is that treasure."

AFTER four hours of backbreaking work, Peter stood beside a hut and tallied the miscellaneous gear brought ashore. The natives worked and laughed, too pleased with their new island to think of the one they had left. Naka had appeared from nowhere, and the ship's stove was set up under a palmetto thatch which he built in an hour without tools other than his galley cleaver. With Maxon, the big cook hoisted out water tanks and set them in the shade. Nimble brown men trotted back and forth between ship and shore, carrying stores; clever little brown women, none of them old, stripped fronds of the small palms and wove sides for huts, made thatch for roofs. Naka prepared a boiler full of rice for them, but now they were on their own familiar soil and found better food growing wild. Two of them fished from the rocks, and every few minutes a glittering mutton-

fish, or grouper, or mullet was added kicking to the heap.

When they stopped for a midday meal, Peter lighted a cigar and penetrated the bush. He found the merest trace of a trail, and lost that within fifty yards. When he turned toward the sea he felt a chill at the sense of isolation forced upon him by the sheer hostility of the tangled jungle. He heard the surf on the beach; otherwise he could never have determined his way back by sight.

Somewhere far off there were different sounds, of some sort of life, but he could not decide what. When he regained the shore he started to walk along toward a small headland on which stood three spidery palms. Maxon had gone to the *Scorpion's* saloon to collect his belongings. Peter's and Gytha's had been taken ashore before.

The headland ended the wide beach. Beyond lay a shore forbidding in its ragged sheerness. Coral, like broken glass, offered no welcome to swimmer or boat; and it stretched away for a mile without a break. At the other end of the rocky shore there seemed to be a smaller island, high and rugged, having, so far as Peter could see with his monocular glass, no growth but scrub cedar and cactus. He scrutinized it more narrowly, because in that direction the crew had followed Jinks with what he had taken from the saloon. Peter guessed what that was. If it wasn't the mysterious jigsaw puzzle, with the missing pieces now added, then Peter was willing to be put down as a fool.

He slowly swept his gaze down the small islet from crest to sea margin. Midway a movement arrested his attention. Focusing with extreme nicety, he rested his elbow on a ledge of rock and looked closely. There were men. He could not discern faces; but he would swear to the hulking figure of Tug Lammas anywhere. Tug and others huddled around crouching figures whose heads were almost touching.

Now and then the upright shapes ducked swiftly into a stooping position and seemed to be reaching for something. Peter shook his head and slowly made his way back to the wreck. Treasure or not, Jinks and his followers were losing no time over that jigsaw puzzle.

MEANWHILE Gytha followed Flencher through a wilderness of beauty. In a very few minutes her own uneasiness passed and she found herself overwhelmed by the sheer loveliness of the island. They had turned sharply twenty yards after leaving the shore, and on the other side of a thicket of canes, which appeared impenetrable, a narrow path opened out. Single file was necessary, and Flencher had to let go of her, but she had no intention of trying to escape him now. After what she had seen of his methods she preferred to rely upon her own intelligence to get her out of whatever predicament she now faced.

And, so far, she had to admit that his behavior toward herself had not been startling, beyond the initial act, which made her to all purposes a captive. Soon they reached a steep slope. Not a human being had been met, yet the path must be the work of human hands. No sign of habitation could she see, yet there were sounds far off, but coming nearer, which anywhere else she would have said were domestic in origin.

"How are you making the grade, Gytha?" he called back to her. "Getting too steep?"

"If it is, I suppose I shall have to manage it." She laughed. "There are no cable cars here, surely."

"If you get tired, sing out. You'll find plenty of surprises here." He too laughed, in a low chuckle which continued for some moments and kept breaking out at odd intervals afterward.

Now the path was really steep. The undergrowth became less dense. Gytha saw the lofty peak much closer, and her face was suddenly cooled with soft spray. At the next turn in the path she stopped and put her hands to her breast, speechless with awe.

Out of a forbidding cliff poured a silvery column of water; all around the source of it grew great plants with leaves as big as the *Scorpion's* topsails. Flowers as large as cabbages and as red as blood, as yellow as the sun, as white as the surf, and flinging upon the air a fragrance as of a million crushed frangipani blooms, covered the gaunt cliff everywhere except that one spot, like a toothless mouth, from which the torrent poured. And as it fell, the silvery column was divided by a breeze that swept the face of the peak into a hundred dancing jets of feathery spray. The sun touched the picture with the brush of a magic artist.

Gytha stood entranced.

"I knew you'd forgive me for bringing you to such a Garden of Eden. The first Eve never had better." Flencher chuckled, close beside her, and she shook herself into wakefulness, dully resenting his tone in such a place.

He led her on.

Half a mile farther the slope leveled again, and grassland took the place of jungle. Gytha was sure she saw people, but now she was rather breathless from the tiring walk after so long on the level decks of the brigantine, and she kept silent. In time she would know everything. She was glad there were people, though; the farther she progressed into the wild fastness of the island, the less she relished the idea of finding herself at the end of a journey which must use up all the daylight alone in the company of Flencher Peruvio. Then she saw something else, and so sharp was her relief that she found words.

"Oh, that's a domestic chicken, surely!"

"Does that surprise you?" He laughed.

He was strangely nervous now, and strode along as if approaching some great goal of which only he knew the cost of attainment.

She followed now with less reluctance. Where chickens were, human beings probably were too. She began to look about for houses. The level land was planted, in a ragged native way, not as if the gardener knew or was very much interested in his work. There was so much of it, however, that the things growing in sight would keep a lot of people from feeling hungry. And there were pigs! Half a score of lean, agile beasts that took alarm and made off, leaping like goats, as Peruvio turned an abrupt bend and waited for Gytha to come up to him.

A flock of fowls rose clacking from the ground and flew clumsily into a bush. Gytha turned the bend, and now her eyes were wide, her mouth fell open. Here was Flencher's secret. She had believed him mad when he invited her to accompany him, saying, "Let's go and see if our rooms are ready." Now the old feeling of trepidation attacked her again. She was afraid of entering that rambling, yet well built house which she faced at the end of a small garden ablaze with blooms.

It was a low, bungalow type of house, surrounded with a broad veranda screened with split cane. Flencher approached it with exaggerated caution, putting a finger to his lips to warn the girl. It looked so utterly home-like that she fought hard against her fears. She expected to see some neat housewife suddenly step from the porch to welcome her. Yet all remained quiet as the grave.

Flencher apparently expected nothing else. Perhaps he had trained these island people as he trained his seamen, to silence. Gytha shuddered a little as she wondered if he trained them in the same way. But he was leading her up the shallow steps, through the hanging cane screen, along the dim, cool veranda, holding her hand now.

As her eyes grew accustomed to the soft light, Gytha began to discern things. Inside the screen, too, there were sounds. They were not nice sounds. But she made out the figure of a surprising person, and almost ignored the sounds. Seated on a swinging hammock was the

dearest old lady, white haired, placid faced, smiling and dainty, looking like some figurine from a museum of art. And the dear old lady was tranquilly plucking a live fowl between her knees . . .

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECRET

FLENCHER stepped forward and gently took the fowl from the old lady's hands, wrung its neck and handed it to her again. Then he introduced Gytha, and the girl was staggered by her welcome.

"My mother, Gytha. Mother, this is the lady I've been looking for all my life. She's going to stay with you."

"Sit down, my dear. I like your looks," said the old lady, with a sweet, guileless smile, and never stopped pulling feathers.

Gytha sat beside her and marveled. Once she glanced at Peruvio, and then with a shock she realized something. This lawless man, brutal and cold as a snake, had a passionate regard for the old woman which transcended all other passions. His eyes blazed as he watched them, the bewildered young girl he had stolen, and the insane old mother who looked like a saint and plucked living chickens like a fiend.

There was no resentment at the quietly stressed necessity for killing the bird before plucking it. In the old, baby blue eyes, and the placid, smooth face with its silvery crown of thick hair, was only a supreme innocence and a complacence that accepted all matters without question. Gytha felt a keen interest. She began chatting, and then into Peruvio's eyes crept relief. He relaxed from his fierce attitude of doubt and smiled.

"When I saw you in Suva I knew you'd like her and understand," he said. He sat on the veranda rail and took off his cap. "You see why I have to keep this place secret, Gytha. The damned authorities stole her and locked her up. Said she was mad. She doesn't look mad, does she? Just because she had an accident with a woman's baby."

Gytha shuddered. She could guess at the accident after having witnessed the chicken plucking. But she avoided Peruvio's eyes now. If she had believed him mad before, she was convinced now, and there was small wonder as to the origin of his madness. Yet he spoke as if he defended the most cherubic innocent alive from the persecution of fanatics.

"I took her away," he went on, swinging his leg and brushing away insects with his cap. His voice was vibrant with wrath, though his words were simple enough. "They got her away from me the first time—stole her while I was on board the vessel. But the next time they couldn't, for I found this island. No fear of them finding her here!" He laughed grimly. "Nobody ever sights this island. It's not charted. Nobody'll ever find it. And nobody's ever going to leave it after this. I've got everything needed now. Everybody, too.

"Mother's going to live her life out in peace and comfort, in your good company, Gytha, and lacking nothing. My natives will breed me workers to take the places of those who die. Peter shall transform these ragged patches of fields into gardens, and make the wild vegetables and fruits yield proper food. I shall wait for the men to get tired of their silly treasure hunt, then they will build real houses for all.

"There's everything here for all human needs. In a year Flencher's Island will be a paradise, and you shall be its queen!" His voice rose and his eyes blazed afresh. "And mother will show you whether she's mad or not—won't you, mother?"

He sprang from the rail and embraced the old lady with a tenderness that kept Gytha tonguetied, so utterly sincere it was.

"Silly! Of course I'm not mad," laughed the woman, throwing down the fowl and getting up. "Come, child. I'll

show you your room."

"That's the stuff," cried Peruvio. "You potter about and learn the ropes, Gytha, and I'll run down to the ship and wind things up there."

He was gone, and Gytha was left alone with her charge. She wanted to protest to him that she did not intend to remain here, his prisoner in fact; in face of his filial passion she dared not. Not now.

She was amazed at the completeness of the house. In every room was evidence of long and careful preparation for this homecoming. Mosquito netting hung over real beds, and the windows were screened with copper mesh. The furniture in most rooms was obviously of native manufacture; but in the large room, announced as her own, the furnishings were modern, even gaudy; and the bed was a heavy brass double one.

She felt uneasy again; but the old lady hurried her along and showed her a small room beyond, bare and bleak, but full of everything a seaman could need, with clothes hanging in a corner locker and cigars scattered about, which looked as if they had been lying there for months. A cage hung in the window, but no bird lived in it.

"Ah, that was poor Luis' parrot. It died," the old lady explained with a sorrowful shake of the head. "I must tell him about it when he comes back."

"Was it fed?" asked Gytha, seeing no traces of food, though there were other signs of occupation in the cage.

"Of course. It caught things that flew through the bars, my dear. But it couldn't stand undressing, you know. I think it caught a chill."

"You don't mean you— Oh, you pulled its feathers out?" the girl gasped.

The old lady smiled brightly.

"I always undress my birds, my dear. It's not nice for them to be always dressed up in fine feathers. It's not good for people, is it?"

"But you mustn't pull feathers out of live birds! It's cruel. You must not ever do it, Mrs. Peruvio."

"I used to undress Luis when he was small," the old lady argued, frowning. "You're not going to begin changing things, I hope? Luis promised me he'd bring a nice young girl who'd be a companion for me."

"If you pull feathers out of live birds, I'll run away. Feathers are not like clothes, you know."

Gytha seized upon the one possibility left to her. If she must stay on this island—and she saw no way of avoiding it until a vessel chanced along—she would have to make the best of it and try to understand this strange mad woman without risking making her hostile. She had seen Flencher's eyes as he watched their meeting; she was under no delusion as to his attitude if she failed to meet his views.

"Don't let's talk about it," she said quickly. "We'll find so many other nicer things to do, won't we?"

The old woman seemed to have no vagaries besides her amazing callousness. She trotted all over the place with Gytha, eager as any normal housewife to show her domain to a guest. There were natives about the place, and now they began to appear. All males, and black as negroes, Gytha saw. One was dragging a pig toward a palm hut; soon the pig squealed horribly.

"Come, my dear! You'd like to see them kill a pig," said the old woman, and pulled at Gytha's arm excitedly.

Gytha did not want to see a pig killed. She held the old woman back.

"Another time, please. I want you first to show me where I am to put my things when they arrive."

FEMININE curiosity won. Gytha's luggage was on the veranda, brought up by the brown people. In five minutes after unlocking a trunk the old lady was sitting on the floor with all Gytha's clothes scattered around her, happy as a child with a new doll. It was, in fact, an ugly French doll, souvenir of a Suva dance, that at last brought inspiration to Gytha. She presented it to her hostess,

and for that day at least chickens and other feathered creatures were safe.

When Gytha had unpacked sufficient belongings for the immediate present, she wandered around the place. She was determined not to unpack all her things; she was convinced she could come to some better decision if she could get word with Mr. Maxon. It was significant that she did not think of Peter. Peter believed in some silly treasure yarn, and until he had run that to earth and found it a myth he would be of little service to her. But Mr. Maxon had promised that he would help her in trouble, and as soon as possible she would find him and put him to the test. Now, with the sun getting well westward, it seemed inescapable that she resign herself to spending the night here.

That room of Flencher's, beyond her own, had disquieted her until she found that the door between had a good lock and key, and the key was on her side. She felt a little resentful because the furnishings of her room were gaudy, even flamboyant; and some pictures she had taken down and hidden in drawers. But then, she told herself, all the evidence pointed to another tenant having been destined for this room, and perhaps it fitted that other better than her. She could manage; if only she could keep that terrible old woman with the saintly face from pulling feathers or taking lizards apart or some other such pleasantry.

The blacks about the place were frizzy haired and savage looking; they took no notice of Gytha. She walked all around the spacious level paths and behind the house came upon a spot from which the view held her spellbound. In the wonderfully clear air the island lay like a model set in glass. The ocean rolled blue and shining, speckless to the horizon. The reef was marked with a line of dazzling white, with gleaming black patches after a sea broke and receded; within the reef lay the green and white of shoal water, and the dark blue, almost black, of deeper pools.

There was a smaller islet, the one which Peter had seen, connected with the main island by a ridge of sand which was probably dry at low water and covered some four feet at high. Behind her the peak rose a hundred feet above the house; below her, so clearly seen as to startle her at first sight, lay the wreck of the *Scorpion* and the temporary huts. People on the shore seemed like ants.

She felt lost in the immensity of ocean surrounding her. Never could anything impress her more with the truth of Flencher's boast than this view. Yes, Flencher's Island lay remote; no vessel could ever find it. Yet every other island was just as remote until a vessel came along. She really knew that, but still the prospect she viewed caused her heart to sink.

Gytha Crosbie was a normal girl, brought up sanely, untrammeled by motheaten beliefs of an older day; she was as courageous as most girls, as cheerful under difficulties; she had held her own many times with too ardent men at dances and parties, without gaining the name of prude. But here she was beaten. The longer she gazed upon the vast ocean, the more she thought of every phase of this cool kidnaping trick and its amazing perpetrator, the darker grew her conviction that she was trapped.

What could she do if Peruvio chose to act the beast? Nothing. If she had a chance in the world to checkmate him, it was through gaining the confidence of his mother. That way she might postpone the evil day and come to some understanding with Maxon. Those men, who had been shut up in the trade room and left callously to drown, but for Jinks, were no friends of Flencher's, whatever they were once. She had rather liked Jinks. Jinks had shown her many small signs of good will. Perhaps she could see Jinks.

"There must be some way out!" she said aloud, and the sound of her own voice heartened her.

She turned toward the house. Down

there on the wreck were three boats. The ship itself might be utterly beyond salving, but she was built of wood, and sailors had been known to do wonderful things with timber and spars from wrecks. She would meet Flencher on his own ground and give him no hint of her real feelings.

FLENCHER returned at dusk, bringing Peter. Behind came the fifty brown people, Naka and Maxon. Every brown back bore a load. Four of the savages carried Naka's stove on poles. Gytha noticed that one of the brown girls had a very small burden; and she kept close to Maxon. The girl looked very well fed, too. She was a pretty little thing. She was the girl for whom Maxon had stolen Gytha's water bottle in the drought, and Peter winked at Gytha as if she knew all about it. All Gytha gathered from the wink was that Peter was feeling very well pleased with himself. Perhaps he had discovered something about the treasure. She would find a chance to talk to him very soon.

In an hour, by full darkness, Naka's stove was producing food for the crowd. Camp was pitched on the level land, and Peruvio apparently put the ship out of his mind. By count, they were all here except Jinks and the crew; and Peruvio never mentioned them at all. He presented Peter to his mother as the "professor", and Peter grinned at the name while looking in astonishment at the old lady, as Gytha had done before.

Supper was laid on the veranda, and at the table four sat down. Maxon was in charge of the camp outside, and had not been invited.

Flencher was in high spirits, chaffing Peter about his soils and plants. Peter, in the belief that all such matters were but foils for the true business of the island, grinned cheerfully and answered the banter. The old lady was in high feather. She refused to let go of her new doll and insisted on feeding it liquid food with a spoon. The more soiled it got the more her face beamed. Gytha tried to keep the thing clean, but it only made the old lady petulant; and at the first note of that, Flencher stopped Gytha's efforts with a glance. Concerning outside affairs, the old lady showed not the slightest interest.

"Now you've wrecked the ship, Skipper, how d'you intend to leave the island?" Peter inquired when a tumblerful of Flencher's special rum and coffee mixture had set his blood galloping.

"My dear boy, haven't I told you a dozen times I don't mean to leave?" Flencher laughed, entirely without annoyance.

"Oh, I know, but surely you don't expect me to swallow everything you've told me," Peter probed. Flencher's mood invited audacity. "When you've dug up the treasure, you know, it's no use unless you can carry it away, is it?"

Flencher glanced at Gytha and made a grimace, which caused her to laugh, knowing, as she believed she did, the truth now.

"What's the joke?" Peter demanded, meeting her eye.

"The captain isn't worrying about the treasure, Peter," she said. "He's lost the chart, you know."

She wanted to get his mind off treasure or he'd never be able to face the true situation.

"Well, all I can say is that he'd better get busy and stop Jovial Jinks and his crowd. You chucked me into the forecastle, you know, and I heard a lot."

"But if I can't leave, Peter, how can they?" Flencher chuckled, pouring rum into his coffee.

Gytha suddenly remembered the boats. Had Flencher overlooked them? If he had, she was sure the men had not.

"They'll steal the boats!" she cried, then bit her lip.

Flencher got up from the table, finishing his drink. He lighted a cigar, gave Peter one of his own and glanced at the old lady, who had gone to sleep with her head in her plate, cuddling her dirty

doll. A look of ineffable affection softened his face for a moment.

"Step outside," he whispered, and held aside the screen.

They walked around the house; the camp was quiet under the stars. Maxon's voice was heard, speaking in very low tones. Flencher strode through the darkness with assured tread and, turning the house corner, stopped for the others to join him. A glow was in the sky. He was laughing softly. Taking an arm of each, he led them to the spot from which Gytha had gazed desolately upon the sea.

"They're probably stealing the boats now, but they'll get no nourishment," he said.

Far below, on the shore, a great fire roared and crackled. The *Scorpion* was but a blazing skeleton, her ribs and stern barely discernible; her forepart entirely burned away; her decks a mass of fire. In the glare moved some black figures, darting here and there in frenzy. No, they were getting no nourishment there!

CHAPTER XIV

JIGSAW PUZZLE

JOVIAL JINKS had been to the island before, when Flencher first brought his mother there. He never expected to get clear with the jigsaw puzzle, but when he freed the men from the trade room he gambled on their helter-skelter rush baffling any of Flencher's efforts to stop any particular one of them.

They followed him, never looking back, each one sure that it was anybody but he who would be stopped; and there were no shots, no fatalities, not even a shout from the Flencher. They ploughed after the steward and never paused until they gathered around him on the small islet beyond the ridge.

"Out with that blinkin' chart, Jinks!"

"No hurry, me lads," said Jinks. "Easy does it, I say. Nothink's gained by rushin'. Wonder what he went and done that for?"

Jinks gazed back at the *Scorpion,* so completely wrecked. But when men scent treasure, and have the chart, other considerations may slide. Bill Blades laid hands on the bag, and the steward leaped at him like a cat.

"'Ands off, Blades! This is my job. Some o' you blokes has to learn yer places."

"I'll soon put you in yours!" growled Blades, snatching at the bag. Jinks snatched harder and tore the bag from the seaman's fingers. "Hold this!" he snarled, giving it to Tug Lammas and, with a twist of body and a flash of the wrist, he faced Blades with a foot-long knife.

The little steward's teeth chattered; but his eyes were like diamonds, and every fiber of his skinny body quivered. Blades backed off, trying to laugh.

"You win, Jovial! No offense meant. Put up the sticker, laddie. We all got a yen to play with that puzzle, I guess."

"Yer yen can wait," snapped Jinks, reluctantly putting his knife away. "May as well come to brass tacks first as last, all of you. Things has got to be talked over." He licked his lips and spat, gazing again along shore at the wreck. "What did he go and do that for? That's the question."

"To 'ell wiv 'im!" grumbled one in the rear.

"Yes, to 'ell wiv 'im!" mocked Jinks. "And how do he expect to leave this perishin' island? And if he can't, then how can we?"

"Watch 'im, that's all, Jinks. Let's get our hooks on the boodle, my lad, then we can talk to 'im, can't we? Let's look at that chart," suggested Tug Lammas, who held a high opinion of the cunning of Flencher Peruvio, and did not for a moment believe that the wreck indicated any intention to remain isolated on the island.

Jinks shook his head, but opened the bag.

"Got to find a level bit," he said sharply. "These bits o' wood got to fit

like they was one board. Ought to brought some shovels along, you did. Too much of a bleedin' 'urry to think of common things like diggin', you was. A couple o' hands ought to trot back and get shovels."

He dumped the hundreds of queer bits of the puzzle on to a smooth rock and began to turn each bit colored side up. A dozen hands flew to help. But Jinks was uneasy. Of them all, he alone worried about anything beyond the jigsaw puzzle.

"This is easy!" yelled Blades. "Look, here's a lot as never come apart. That's half the job, bullies."

"Ought to go back there and make sure o' stores," Jinks muttered. "Bit o' plank, too, would help."

But nobody cared for stores or planks. The sun climbed to meridian and was well on its westing, and eight men knelt in a sweating, panting, glaring huddle around a ragged patch of colored wood which rapidly grew. Jinks held to the center position, but even Jinks had ceased to think about stores or planking. Hunger and thirst troubled them little; they had but to put out their hands and snatch bananas from the live bunch; a solitary coconut tree grew out of the sand right where they crouched, and when a nimble seaman had swarmed aloft and thrown down a score of green nuts, and Jinks had expertly opened them with his most efficient knife, thirst was banished for that moment.

"You sure you got it all?" croaked Lammas, peering into Jinks' eyes at a distance of two feet.

"You ain't holdin' none out on us, Jinks?" Bill Blades suggested, still sore from that early encounter.

Jinks never looked up. He turned a bit of wood shaped like a trodden octopus, and tried to fit it into a space shaped like a jellyfish. Jinks was absorbed. He scarcely heard the men speaking.

"Look! 'E's done it!" whispered a sweat blinded fellow whose intellect was incapable of picking out bits to fit, and who believed Jinks must be a magician.

Jinks leaned back to rest, and was suddenly aware of the imminence of sunset. He got to his feet, creakily.

"It'll be dark in half an hour. Cover it with them big leaves and let's sneak down to the ship while light's with us. I ain't achin' to live on banarners, I ain't. Come on."

Mention of food did what no mention of the dark could have done. The crowd shuffled along the shore, stiff from kneeling, aware of a chill now the sun was almost gone. As they approached the *Scorpion*, keeping to the fringe of bush, Jinks began muttering again, and presently he broke into a run. The huts they had seen in the forenoon were gone. Even Naka's stove had vanished. Not a human being was visible.

"That's what we want!" Blades chuckled. "We'll rummage her and clean out his private lockers. I could do with a snort o' redeye, eh, Tug?"

"It's redeye you'll get!" yelped Jinks, waving his arms now and galloping madly.

A thin spiral of smoke rose from the after part of the wreck. It thickened to a black swirl. When they arrived, gasping, beneath the upthrust jibboom, they could hear the crackle of fire inside the hull. Jinks clambered on board in desperation, and they followed him. The decks were hot; the saloon was a bed of red coals. The trade room and store room had been gutted, and there was the reek of oil. The rest of the wreck burned without mineral aid.

A gallon rum jug had rolled into the waterways, but the bung was out. Blades grabbed it, raised it to his mouth, then smashed it to the deck in rage.

"I told you somebody ought to ha' come here long ago," said Jinks sullenly.

He made one swift rush to try to enter the saloon, but was beaten back. He dropped ashore and stood for a moment shaking his head.

"I been a jackass. I admits it," he said.

He stepped into the bush, ranging

here and there over the spot where the stores had been landed. Scarcely a trace remained of more than half a hundred people and a ship's stores landed there that same day. And the sun had gone, the dark was come; the swift twilight died and the sky began to glow with the merry glare of the burning *Scorpion*. Some eddy of air got below, and the fire burst forth with a roar.

"No good stoppin' here," Jinks said mournfully. "Tomorrow we'll come along and try to save some iron to dig with."

THEY slept around the treasure chart. At daylight Jinks ate bananas, found a pool of fresh water in the rocks, and was kneeling over the puzzle before anybody else awoke. Too many hands hindered the work; noon came, and another night, and still pieces would not fit. But now no speech was wasted. The thing was taking shape. One or two impatient comments had been made at first, because instead of a chart some human figures seemed to be materializing in the puzzle. When Jinks patiently explained that treasure charts were scarcely likely to be simple lines, the comments changed to ribaldry, then ceased.

When only a space as big as a man's hand remained to be fitted in the middle of the square, the third day had come; and now Jinks' chief trouble was the mystery of Flencher's failure to come seeking either them or the puzzle.

"I can't fathom that," he announced under the stars as he lay alongside the rock with the remaining pieces of the puzzle in his pocket. "We're gettin' things too easy."

"Easy?" grunted Tug Lammas. "Call bananas and warm water easy? Soon's we get that silly puzzle set up, and read the directions on it, I'm goin' to brace up Flencher for some stores. He'll sell 'em, and we can buy 'em."

"Flencher ain't that simple," muttered Jinks. He lay quiet awhile before starting on a bit of narrative none of them had heard before. "You fellers think ye're clever, but you don't know Flencher Peruvio. I do. So does Naka. Naka was with him when he took his old woman out o' the loony house in Sydney. You don't know nothin' of her, neither. She's here. I was with him when he brought her here.

"You seen Naka's got no tongue? That's how Flencher keeps niggers quiet! He'd ha' done him in proper if the nigger could write, but he can't. Besides, the old lady likes Naka; and what the old lady likes, Flencher'll get for her if he has to rob 'eaven.

"Me, he likes me. But I don't like him, and I don't expect he'll like me after this. Naka don't like him, either, any more than I do. Naka's goin' to pull his tongue out some day—if I don't stop him. I got my own private war with Flencher. I'll see as Naka don't get him first. But nobody's goin' to get him before this here loot's in hand."

There was a dull rumble of sleepy voices, and Jinks went on:

"Do you know what I think about it? You don't! You're too woozy. Why's he wrecked the ship, and let all us hop it with his chart? 'Cause he knows we'll have to go crawlin' to him on our bellies for grub, that's why. We can dig and we can sweat, and because we're runaways he'll chisel us out of our shares. He's got somethink up his sleeve, he has. Got a boat stowed away somewhere, and he'll let us scrabble his boodle for him, then leave us here with a laugh for comp'ny."

"Wot's your private war wiv 'im, Jovial?" came drowsily out of the thick darkness.

"Hell! Didn't he swipe my gal? Flamette was mine before that swine set eyes on her. But she was a good sort, Flamette was. We was goin' to go cushy and keep mum till he got his loot, then do him in the eye for the lot. But he put her ashore—"

Jinks sprang up. Somebody was crossing the ridge in the low water.

Like shadows the men rose and spread along the bush, feeling for stones big enough for weapons.

"Jinks!" the hail came in a quiet, friendly voice.

Jinks hushed the men fiercely. Flencher would be friendly if he came seeking them.

"It's Maxon!" the voice called again.

Still Jinks kept silent. Soon Maxon stepped from the sea and stood squeezing water from his shoes. He was clearly visible against the sea and the stars, and somebody was with him, somebody with a burden.

"Jinks, I'm on the level. I've got some grub for you fellows. I had to seem to stand in with Flencher, but I'm one of you, remember, and I'm here to prove it."

Jinks stepped out to meet the mate. One of the brown women took from her head a bulky square package and set it on the sand. Maxon produced from his pockets two bottles of rum and half a dozen plugs of tobacco. The men surrounded him like hungry dogs. Had Flencher been hiding behind the bait, it would have caught the lot of them. But he was not. Maxon was but running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. The rum gurgled, and the knives whittled tobacco. Tongues were loosened.

"How's the puzzle coming?" Maxon asked very soon.

"Done tomorrer," stuttered Blades, almost choked with rum in his greed.

"We'll want some tools," said Jinks.

"I'll bring them next trip," said Maxon. "But what's the chart like? Make it out yet?" He peered around as if he could see it in the dark. Jinks guided him to the rock, uncovered the puzzle, and Maxon struck a match. He glanced at it, then laughed. "Looks like a couple o' gals in a bath, don't it? Suppose he's fooled us all, Jinks?"

"No, I don't!" snapped Jinks. "He'd better not, neither!"

"Oh, I don't believe he would," drawled Maxon, "but he always has laughed at the treasure yarn, and only tonight I heard him laughing as if he meant it when Peter put the question." He lighted a cigar, puffed for a moment, then stepped toward the ridge. "Tell you my idea, lads. You've got the wrong puzzle! If you have, you're in a bad fix here. You haven't a thing to bargain with. But then again he may be bluffing. You may have the right dope. I'm willing to swing in along with you, anyhow.

"I'll come down again tomorrow and bring some tools. Can't say just what time. I have to watch my step up there. He's got a regular plantation, Jinks; and some savages, too. Our quiet little brownskins are shut up like slaves at dark. I sneaked this one out before they locked her in . . . Well, so long."

Maxon vanished as he had come.

The puzzle was finished early next morning, and deep curses greeted the smirking ladies portrayed upon its face. Jinks stared at it. Of line or sign there was none. It was simply a picture, a nude that was not even indecent. Men went away and shook fists at the heights, where yesterday they had seen tiny habitations springing up.

"The blarsted chart's on the bottom of it!" decided Jinks, and gingerly tried to raise an edge with his knife. Jigsaw puzzles are not made to be lifted. The corner dropped off, and he let it alone. "Got to get some broad leaves, chaps," he called out. "Got to slide it on 'em and turn it over. Go on, scatter. There's some in that gully."

For an hour, stumbling seamen gathered leaves like children, and humbly stood by while Jinks bullied them for fools and sent them off for more. Nothing would do. About noon Jinks tore off his shirt and ripped the seams. With his knife he stripped the center stems of big leaves; then he made a frame, on which he stretched his shirt, and then they shouted his praise. He was grim. Triumph almost touched him, but he abruptly stopped work and pried a big piece of the puzzle from the center,

turning it over to examine the underside. He flung it down and stamped on it.

"That hellion has done us in the eye!" he yelled. "There ain't no chart on the damned thing!"

Tug Lammas picked up the trodden scrap, more cautious than Jinks. The sand and the steward's sole had scoured every piece of possible clue clean. Blades loosened another bit from the puzzle. The underside was barren. Now the men picked up bits without caution. Men glared into each other's eyes.

"No, there ain't no chart on the damn thing!" they said.

Twice Jinks started up the peak. Twice he thought better of it. Maxon never appeared again. The inference was plain. They had been allowed to fool themselves; and Flencher was up there grinning at them; and Maxon had found it all out and was having a laugh too.

"I'm goin' to brace him!" declared Jinks, and started for the third time.

This time he went farther. He did not come back for three hours; and when he did return he wore the look of a man who has seen some horrible thing. He was chalk-white. His mouth drooled.

"I got halfway up the cliff," he uttered. "None o' yer paths for me. I went up the way he wouldn't be lookin' for me. And right underneath where we see them huts goin' up I come on Naka! Gawd! All mashed up, he was, like he'd been put through his own meat grinder. Had a bit o' rope in his hand, too. Bowline in the end he had holt on, the other end cut clean. Come down a proper crusher, Naka had. Gawd!"

CHAPTER XV

EDEN IN THE MAKING

ANY doubt of Flencher's sincerity regarding his island paradise was dissipated with the daybreak after the burning of the *Scorpion*. Gytha emerged from the house after a much quieter night than she had feared she might experience; there had been no invasion of her privacy, no disquieting look or word from the Flencher. When she retired, after seeing the old lady tucked in with her doll, she found a change had been worked in her own room. Every picture that might offend, every last trace of preparation for another woman had vanished.

Aside from the rather garish brass bed, which could scarcely be exchanged at the moment for a less gaudy piece, nothing remained there beyond her own baggage and some native furniture. When she awoke, she found a canvas bathtub beside her bed, full of spring water cold as ice, and a tray with China tea and sweet cakes.

At breakfast she succeeded in making the old lady feed her doll only dry food, and she was very intensely aware of Flencher's scrutiny. She caught his eye once, and the man was no mystery any more. She might not understand many things about him, and certainly she had not resigned herself to submit to lifelong imprisonment on the island; but she fathomed his impelling motive in establishing this place, and at the same time realized that she held a powerful weapon in her own hands for keeping him in his place.

The man was insane—with such a parent he could hardly be otherwise—but he was passionately devoted to the little old lady to the exclusion of every other interest; and Gytha saw in his softened gaze bent upon her the clue that could lead her to security here, perhaps to release.

"I meant to bring a baggage from Suva. I must have been crazy!" He laughed as they left the veranda. "I knew you'd love mother. You can have anything I've got, Gytha."

"You know what I want," she answered, looking him in the eye. "Tahiti is where I wanted to go."

Fury flamed in his face, and she shivered. The fury changed to pain, and she was penitent.

"Perhaps a ship will pass, and if I have made your mother happy you will let me go, won't you?" she asked more gently.

"You're never going to leave here!" he said somberly. "As long as you do your best to make mother happy, you're safe from me, if that's worrying you. That's something, if you but knew it. I'm not used to squeamish girls. Chew that over."

Peter waited impatiently to hear what his job was to be. Flencher treated Maxon almost as he treated the natives, except that Maxon was a sort of boss. But Peter was there to do a specific job, and Flencher knew what he wanted.

"This island's going to be self-supporting," Flencher said sharply, walking Peter around the place. "The ground'll grow anything. These black savages I left to look after mother only scratched the soil—that's all they know—and they've had plenty of food. But now there are fifty laborers to feed, and I've paired 'em off for the best results. Soon they'll be producing more laborers. In the stuff I brought here you'll find everything needed to develop the land and grow good crops. That's why I collared you."

The man laughed at Peter's grimace.

"You were an unexpected good fairy, Peter. I put on the island some time ago a lot of choice poultry and pigs. They have bred, and in a year the meat supply will be assured for all time. There's fish in the sea to feed the multitude. Remember what I said once about supply and demand? Here's the demand, and here's the supply, lacking only your clever touch. You're going to be a big man, Peter."

"But, damn it all, Peruvio, you can't really be serious in intending to hold Gytha and me prisoners for life?" cried Peter angrily. "Oh, I know you've told us so, and I know you've not only wrecked the ship, but burned her; but something will surely pass in sight some day, and—"

"Listen to me, once for all!" Flencher exclaimed, and Peter saw the old red spark kindling in his eyes. "There will be nobody to sight this island. Do you think I have sailed the Pacific all my life without knowing the routes? Why did I cut out Naka's tongue? Because he knows where I have put mother. Why did I let the crew imagine I had treasure here? To make sure they wouldn't chatter to others. I have kept them from talking by my own methods, and now they're here, as you are; and when I've let them go hungry a bit, to pay 'em for their silly break, they'll come and work on the real stone buildings I'm putting up, like the rest of the laborers."

"Maxon believes the treasure yarn, and I'm not sure that I don't," Peter retorted. "Nobody but a fool would take in this fairy tale of setting up a colony cut off from all the world. I don't, that's flat. So here's where I stand, and make the best of it: I can't help myself at present, so I shall get to work on your plans. But I give you my word I shall never stop trying to get away, and when I go I'll take Miss Crosbie with me. Is that clear?"

Peter stood back a bit. He expected to be attacked, and long ago he had resolved to do better in his next encounter. He was surprised, for Flencher was smiling at him tolerantly.

"That's the way for a man to talk, Peter. Cards on the table. That's us. Here's my hand. As long as you do my work as I want it, you'll be treated like a little prince. Try to escape all you want to. That'll amuse me. If I see any chance of you doing so, I shall kill you. As for taking Gytha away—well, laddie, she's safe just now, but I can't promise to be patient if her friends make trouble. Understand that?

"As for Maxon, I don't know but what I'll chase him out to join the other rats. I know he's playing loose with one of the native women. He was before we landed. I'll wait a day or two. Perhaps the girl's man will slip a knife into Mr. Maxon and save me

trouble. But let's not worry about others. Until you see a chance to flit, you're on the job. When I see you trying to flit, I shall stop you. All straight?"

THE colony was in the making. Flencher ran his people as he had run his ship; except that his fifty brown islanders were now in familiar surroundings, and swiftly regained their natural happy spirits. Huts went up like magic, and the poultry and pigs were rounded up from the wild bush and put into roomy and sanitary pens, sagaciously arranged for breeding. The blacks became fishermen and butchers. Peter soon sank himself in the work he loved; and Gytha found herself growing interested in the funny old lady who had no striking madness except cold cruelty.

"She's amazing, Peter!" Gytha said. They were watching the brown people like a hive of buzzing bees about the place. Mrs. Peruvio was making coconut cakes in Naka's kitchen, and the big black cook—unaware of his imminent fate—hovered over her like a benignant Djinn. "To see her like this you'd think her the matron of a children's home, without a thought in her silvery old head beyond human compassion. Yet—" the girl shuddered—"I caught her this morning pulling a live lizard to bits and feeding them to that hideous rag doll I gave her!"

"I know," rejoined Peter gloomily. "It's in the blood. Peruvio beat a man savagely this noon for chopping open green nuts with a spade. Said he could breed niggers but couldn't breed new spades. I expect the man'll die. Yet I saw him help a woman with a heavy load; and when I challenged him about beating the man, he grinned like a boy at me. Told me the woman was bearing a child, and that was valuable. If he killed off the men and left just one the women would still breed laborers; but a woman hurt was a woman lost to breeding. I felt sick, Gytha."

"Peter," the girl whispered, "can't we do something? Mr. Maxon promised he'd help me. We can't go on forever, can we? For hours I found myself almost feeling resigned; then I felt sick with horror. Let's speak to Maxon."

"Maxon's watching his own interests," said Peter sadly. "Peruvio's on his heels. I asked Maxon why Naka saved the skipper's life in that storm. He told me a horrifying tale. Flencher cut out Naka's tongue to keep him from telling about this island. Maxon still believes that there's treasure, and that Naka saved Flencher simply because, without him, we'd not be able to find the island at all. He believes that Naka will murder Peruvio as soon as he's located the loot. Maxon means to be in on that."

Peter glanced cautiously around. Flencher was some distance away on the edge of the cliff, gazing down toward the small islet.

"That man's more than mad, Gytha. He's a fiend. He told me more about the old woman, while we planned the crops for the season. She was in the madhouse for torturing babies; and when Peruvio stole her away two keepers and a doctor were killed. But though he was in it, he was not in evidence, so got clear. He never took her anywhere near a port, but brought her straight here. He'd fitted this place up ready for her. He was investigated, but nothing could be actually proved against him.

Between striking Naka dumb and letting Jinks and the rest nurse the idea of loot, he kept them from talking. He's an outlaw and a pariah, but what does he care for that now?"

Peruvio turned and came toward them. Peter said hurriedly:

"Let's appear contented, and give him no chance to suspect us. It's our one chance."

Naka was missing. Flencher took a rifle and ran to his outlook over the islet. Peter heard shots, saw Flencher firing at the islet, then busied himself over his

work as the furious man came slowly back. The old lady was setting out some flowers Peter had found for her, making a garden as a child plays, pulling up plants and sticking them elsewhere with no idea beyond immediate prettiness of pattern. The fury almost departed from Peruvio's face as he approached, watching her with a poignant affection.

"Seen that big nigger, Peter?" he asked abruptly.

The old lady smiled sweetly. Peter shook his head.

"Not since last night," he answered.

"Damn queer—"

The old lady interrupted her son:

"Naka will be here soon." She smiled. "I saw him out by the cliff last night, dear. He had a rope and went over the edge. You know, he ought never to go there. You've said so, haven't you, Luis?"

Peruvio started toward the cliff again. The old lady called him back.

"He's not there now. I went to look, and he was halfway down, on the rope. It was our new rope, too. He could never have got up, so I cut the rope, and he got down. I put the bit of rope back in the store. I'm sure Naka will be back soon."

Flencher ran. Peter ran after him. Together they knelt and peered over the sheer drop. The old lady went on with her planting. Peter was dizzy, looking down the grim precipice. Flencher leaned far over. Presently he cursed bitterly, and drew back.

"The dirty black scut!" he cried. "So that's his game! Look down, Peter. I'll hold you if you're scared." He laughed harshly. "It may convince you that you've got damn little chance of meddling with Flencher Peruvio's affairs."

Peter dared not refuse. He trusted himself to Flencher and leaned out. In a heap of rocks, where the sheer cliff became a slope, lay the thing that had turned Jovial Jinks a terrified gray.

"Have to get a new cook," said Peruvio.

DAYS went by in a peaceful manner that astounded Peter and Gytha. In the midst of such cold evil it did not seem proper. The plantation was taking form; in the house reigned a tranquillity which would have well befitted a manse. The old lady had seized upon a new toy which Gytha had given her, and spent hours sewing bright beads on silk for curtains. Her slim old fingers showed a cunning skill, and the bright colors fascinated her. Not oftener than twice a day now did Gytha have to rescue some living thing from her hands.

Flencher came often to the house, just for the pleasure of seeing the happy old madwoman. Gytha avoided his eyes, but never more could she deceive herself. His gratitude for what she was doing for his mother was fast turning into a warmer emotion; and in a man of his kind that was ominous. Maxon appeared to be feeling uneasy too. Flencher was too polite toward him. The first sign of uneasiness in the mate was clearly seen when he suddenly stopped loitering about the native huts. He spent more time in Peter's company; and one evening, when Gytha stepped out for air after putting her charge to bed, he intercepted her.

"I want to talk to you, Gytha," he said, using her name glibly. "No danger. Flencher's down at the shore, making sure I've missed nothing in breaking up the wreck." Maxon uttered a short laugh. "Just waiting for my scalp, he is! He won't get it. But how about you, Gytha? It's time we got together and tried to see our way out."

"It is," she said, eagerly. "I'm afraid. Has Peter been talking to you? We spoke of it the other evening. What can be done?"

Maxon turned her aside into a shady path. A big moon hung over the peak. The murmur of the waterfall filled the soft air. He pressed closely to her, accepting the excuse the narrow way gave him.

"What can be done depends on our-

selves," he said. "Naka was killed by that old she-devil. Do you know why? I'll tell you, Gytha." He took her arm, hanging over her. "Naka knew where that loot is, and he was after it! He's safe now. But it tells the tale, doesn't it? If there's loot, as we all believed, there must be some vessel hidden away, eh? A man like Flencher doesn't bury wealth and cast himself away on an island and leave himself without means of taking it away. He wrecked the *Scorpion* for a bluff. Gytha, we can get away! I'm sure of it. Come with me. What about it?"

Suddenly he gathered her in his arms, and was kissing her before she could escape him.

"Say the word, and let's make the break. I'm crazy for you. Have been since you came on board. Better come with me than stay here to be dragged to that hellion's bed by the hair!"

She was breathless and startled; but, roughly though he put the case, it was near to the truth, and she knew it. She needed time.

"Don't rush me like that," she protested quietly. "How do you know it's all so simple? If I believed—"

"Give me the word, Gytha, and I'll find proof."

"Find me proof, Mr. Maxon, and I'll be glad to think it over," she returned. "Now let me go back. If he found us here alone he'd kill you, and—"

"Killing's no monopoly of his!" Maxon retorted, leading the way back. He was convinced that he had made a good beginning.

Flencher was waiting. He said nothing about the mate appearing in Gytha's company, and the girl entered the house not at all sure of the situation. Flencher seemed indifferent, if he thought anything about it at all. Next morning he sought Maxon.

"Come on, Eli," he said cheerfully. "Gather up all the rock cutting tools and let's put those runaway rats to work. I think they'll be ready now."

On the islet men watched him approaching. Jovial Jinks whetted his knife on his shoe sole. The little steward was skinnier than ever. He licked his dry lips and shivered. Tug Lammas gripped his arm fiercely.

"Don't be a fool!" he said hoarsely. "See what he wants. He ain't packing a gun, that I can see. There's plenty o' men here to manhandle him, and we got to get that loot yet. Put that sticker out o' sight."

Flencher walked across the ridge as if he walked about the garden of the most peaceful Old World monastery. Maxon kept close behind him, not sure of his reception. Half a dozen natives bore burdens of picks, drills and limestone saws.

"Ready to go to work, lads?" Flencher greeted them.

He looked friendly enough. Tug Lammas hurriedly consulted his mates. They were tired of eating bananas and drinking rock pool water and green coconut liquor. Sleeping out was hard, too; and the intense thrill of the treasure hunt had fallen very flat with the discovery of the puzzle's spuriousness. Up there where Flencher lived was where any hope remained; and if they made him believe they were submissive, they might be allowed there. But they knew Flencher of old. He had not changed his nature overnight.

"We're ready to work, Cap'n, but none o' your games," said Tug, cautiously.

"We want decent grub, and no hard layin'," Blades put in boldly.

"How about you, lads?" Flencher smiled at every man in turn.

They growled their agreement with what the others did.

"You, Jinks? What're you laughing about?"

Poor Jovial Jinks was a long way from laughing. His blood ran cold at the manner of Flencher's singling him out. But the little man's cunning kept his blood from freezing; he knew where lay his only chance of ever getting even with that cold devil. It did not lie in

open attack, or silly rebellion when all his mates were against him.

"I been silly, sir," he whined. "I'm ready to go to work."

"That's fine, laddie." Flencher grinned, and said never a word to remind them that they had run like rats and stolen his jigsaw toy. "These niggers will put up huts for you, and Jinks can be your camp steward. Come with me, Jinks, and I'll issue stores. The rest of you go with Maxon. He'll put you to work. If you work well, you'll be treated well, get full and plenty grub, and be happy as sandboys. That's all. Carry on."

Jovial Jinks followed to the house in a state of panic. He was not sure that Flencher did not design some devilish bit of humor toward him until he was on his way back to the islet with a sack of provisions. Two of the blacks slung a cask of sweet spring water down the cliff; and the islet was stored for a week when a pig was killed and sent over.

Maxon made haste to establish his own position. He took the men to a ledge of soft limestone rock and put them to work marking out and cutting blocks for permanent building work. They obeyed him docilely enough while Flencher was in sight; then they muttered about his earlier defection.

"You was coming back to us in a hurry," snarled Bill Blades.

"Not my fault I couldn't," Maxon said mildly. "You know that hellion. But you've got your chance now, haven't you? It was me who persuaded him that you wanted to turn to. Go to work quietly for awhile, then some o' you will be put to work up there, and—well, ask yourself the question. Get me?"

They understood. The ring of hammer on drill, and the buzz of saws woke the echoes; and when Jinks produced tobacco and the blacks dumped a fat hog in sight of them, the *Scorpion's* crew gave the impression of being just what Flencher said, as happy as sandboys.

CHAPTER XVI

JINKS

MEN hewed out blocks of stone and slung them up the cliff face on tackles. On the crest of the islet two of them were building a great lime kiln of hardwood and broken stone. It was not easy work for seamen; but Flencher showed them how to build, and when he was on the spot they gave him all the blind obedience he had exacted aboard the brigantine. It was Maxon who first voiced the thought that began to buzz in the heads of all.

"He's building for a long stay. This lime's for cement, and the stone we're dragging aloft is heavy enough to build a pyramid. Suppose he really fooled us into thinking there was loot? None o' these niggers could do the job we're doing. What if we're here for that? Chew that over, lads."

"You talk like a silly kid!" squealed Jinks.

They were at supper, and Flencher had bullied them all through a steaming day. Up on the plateau they had piled stone enough to build a stores hut, and tomorrow they were to complete the kiln and fire it. Then they were to try their building skill on the hut, in preparation for more pretentious structures. Jinks had been put to work too, and his skinny frame ached with hauling and toting. He had been forced to turn-to again and cook supper, while the bigger men, who had worked no harder than he, lay on the warm earth smoking in blissful ease.

"Just like a silly kid, you yammer!" he repeated. "If you knew Flamette like I do, you wouldn't talk so empty. D'ye think she'd care tuppence at gettin' left behind just for Flencher Peruvio? Hell, ain't she got the pick o' the beach? Flamette's a swell girl, she is. Flencher never got her from me without promisin' her plenty. He done her dirty, but he ain't fooled me. He let us get away with the wrong blinkin'

puzzle, but I'll find the right one, or I'll have his liver! I'll have it anyhow—when I clap hands on that chart. Fill yer bellies and smoke yer heads off. I know what I know. I don't want no help, neither. Smoke that!"

When seamen have hungered and regain that happy state of well being due to tight belts and tobacco, they are very prone to forget grievances. The men believed Jovial Jinks was having a grouse because of his job. Hard luck. Cooks and stewards often had easy times. Let them do a bit of mule work for a change. Jinks cleaned up his cooking gear and mooched down to brood on the seaside, leaving a snoring camp behind him. Maxon had sought quiet too. He saw the red glow of Jinks' pipe and joined him.

"You still think there's a pile to pick up, Jinks?" he offered quietly. He lighted a native cigar at Jinks' pipe bowl.

"Don't you?" countered Jinks. "You was givin' 'em a song and dance, wasn't you? I mean about buildin' for keeps."

"I believe he fooled us all. He needed some white men with lifting and hauling knack. He told me today that when the building's done he's going to stop up the reef passage. That don't sound like loot to me."

Maxon smoked steadily, avoiding Jinks' glare. The sea was smooth, and the reef silent except for periodical mellow thunder as a deeper swell broke on the barrier. It always began at the point of reef, two miles away, and progressively rolled nearer with a growing murmur of sound, until opposite the islet the last of the swell crashed against the last of the coral. Then there would be minutes of hush that would have been absolute but for the whisper of the small ripples on the beach; and again the two mile distant murmur, growing. A cool breeze set the coconut fronds rattling. Black crabs scuttled with a bony rustling over the rocks. Jinks removed his pipe and spat.

"If I thought that swine had got us here for any such madness as you say, Eli, do you know what I'd do? I'd climb right up there now, let some daylight into his guts with this—" He pulled out his knife, a wicked French poultry knife that he had long since adapted to carving tougher meat than chicken; he flashed it before the mate's face. "I'd see the red fire go out of his bad eyes, then I'd chuck meself over the cliff at the top peak and say, 'Here goes nothink!' That's what I think of your silly yarn, Eli."

Maxon laughed softly. He found Jinks' hand and gripped it.

"I believe the same as you do," he said. "I can't see the use of sharing with all hands, though. You and me, eh? Quiet and cunning. That's the word, Jovial? You and me working on our own, separately, and one for both and both for one. How about it?"

"Shake!" said Jinks, returning Maxon's grip.

JINKS had ideas in his head that no man might share. He knew he could not get clear of the island alone, even if he found that treasure hoard. Maxon would be useful—getting away. Jinks did not think much of the mate's intelligence in the matter of seeking the loot; and he meant to work alone, no matter what Eli had meant to do. He had long ago, when Peruvio made him bundle Flamette's gear ashore in Suva, stuck in a note which he hoped, but scarcely dared believe, might bring results. He had seen Yule on the dock with Flamette that sailing morning: Yule, the man whose arm Flencher had so brutally snapped.

Yule was a keen Island navigator, and had a strong leaning toward Flamette. He would be ready to help her in anything likely to bring about the downfall of Flencher. But all Jinks was able to do was to copy from an old work book a lot of courses sailed by the *Scorpion* when last visiting Flencher's Island, and put them in that note. Had

Jinks been a seaman, and not a steward, he might have known what sort of job it would be for anybody to calculate from those mazy courses the position of an island not down on the charts.

But believing that the mysteries of navigation are clear to a seaman, he hoped—without greatly believing. He must depend upon himself, accepting Maxon's help when that was indispensable. He could always get rid of Maxon. Jinks believed that, anyhow.

Jovial Jinks had a brooding brain. When he found Naka lying broken and cold on the ledge below the plateau, he sensed that the big black cook had been on a treasure hunt of his own. After Maxon left him, and the night seemed to hold creepy currents that eddied around him like invisible fingers, he thought much of Naka. Weary he was, but sleep seemed to be the last thing he wanted. He crouched awhile, peering aloft at the dark edge of the cliff. Then he knocked out his pipe, and noiselessly made his way across the ridge and began to scale the narrow tracks.

At the spot where Naka had been found, he halted with a shudder. The stars made light enough for him to see why Naka had used a rope to get down that far. It was a sheer climb beyond. Poor old Naka. To think that he had almost come to blows with him just because each of them had the same object in view, and each feared the other might reach it first. Naka had a sharp sense of location. He knew something, that nigger did. Living up there right with the boss, he had concluded that here was the spot to seek that loot. And if further proof were wanted, on that spot he had come to his end. The fact smote Jovial Jinks hard. He had a conviction that right where he now stood that loot must be.

Now he moved to and fro like a cat. His fingers became claws, his shoes fetters. Kicking off his shoes, he ranged back and forth, scrutinizing every foot of the cliff face There was no means of knowing exactly where Naka had been when that rope was cut. He might have been swinging halfway between ledge and crest. A loose rock rolled down, and the clatter frightened Jinks into trembling panic. Another like that, and out would come to Flencher and catch him between wind and water like a rat.

Minutes passed, and nothing happened. Jinks began to move again. Just by his head, as he passed the spot where Naka had lain, a small shrub grew out of a cleft in the soft rock. In daylight it might have passed unmarked, except as a common bit of the general scene. Now Jinks was worked up to wild imaginings. He took out his knife and prodded at the roots. Savagely he dug, and felt the débris he dislodged pattering on his bare feet. The action was little more than the nervous working off of frenzy. But the knife struck something that was neither root nor rock. Something hard, which sent the knife handle slipping back in his fingers. Heedless now of discovery, Jovial Jinks jabbed away.

The bush moved, hanging by a creeping root, and Jinks seized it, trying to pull himself up to it. It came away in his hands, and all but precipitated him to the ridge beneath. When he picked himself up, and stared breathlessly at the hole, the starlight gleamed on metal —the square end of a small steel chest— and his heart thumped madly.

The little steward flattened himself against the cliff, his head moving here and there, up and down; his eyes glittered and his lips drooled moisture. Here was the prize! Without help from Maxon or anybody else he had found it! Accident? What of that? Naka had known. And Jinks had been smart enough to realize it. Naka had not been cut down just because he was cliff climbing in the dark. He had been dropped to his death because he had chosen to do his cliff climbing in a dangerous spot. Jinks edged away from the rock and gazed at that spot with wild emotions.

He must cover it up again. No sharing out for him. All he had to do now was to lie low, let the others chatter, and

bide his time. Meanwhile, there was something he could do, and it would mark one step forward. His little account with Peruvio. That could be settled at any time now. No need to hold off because Flencher held the key to the prize. Him and his silly jigsaw puzzles! If the *Scorpion* had struck just a bit short of where she did, and filled and sank, those men would have drowned in the trade room, and all because of a silly lot of bits of wood that had made fools of them.

No time like the present. Jinks had seen something of the house when drawing stores. He knew where Peruvio's room was, anyhow, and that was all he needed. They might not be sleeping up there yet; but he could wait. He had waited long. Another hour or so would only add to his triumph. He was not afraid of Flencher alone. Sleeping dogs might lie; when he got through, Flencher would be a dead dog. Good enough for him.

Jinks made his way along the ledge. Around the bluff point of the cliff was the winding path which led down to the ridge from the house. Cunning came to the little man; his luck was with him. Like a shadow he climbed upward, and never dislodged a stone. At the top he paused to peer over the edge. The house lay dark and quiet. The breeze rattled the screens, and now and then a long coconut frond swept the iron roof. Crickets chirped, and far away parakeets chattered as some night prowler of the bush disturbed them. Jinks stole toward the house.

A rain barrel stood beside Flencher's window, kept filled by the rains from the guttered roof. In its shadow Jinks rested until his breathing steadied. Presently he crept around the barrel and stood by the window frame. He took out his knife and ran his thumb along its edge, the starlight gleaming on the broad blade.

He could hear heavy breathing in the room. He licked his lips. He thrust a leg over the sill.

An agile body hurled itself upon him, wrapping long sinewy arms about him, a hand reaching for the knife. Jinks twisted like an eel, desperation driving him frantic.

"What's the game, Jinks?" That was Peter's voice.

That damned fool of a Peter! Jinks tore his knife hand free.

"Take that, you bleedin' meddler!" he squealed, driving the point for Peter's throat.

A hand like a steel claw clamped on his elbow, a heavy body fell on him, crushing him down, snatching the knife point from Peter's flesh with only a scratch to show.

"Paid me a visit, did you, Jovial?" Flencher laughed grimly.

He twisted the arm he held, and the knife fell with a thud. Jinks screamed with pain and terror. Peter picked himself up, and got out of the way, for Jinks was struggling like a maniac and his free arm and legs licked out like the tentacles of a squid. Gytha came from the garden hedge and held his arm, trembling, for Flencher had Jinks in a terrible grip, carrying him by one tortured arm to the cliff edge. The arm snapped. Like a rotten stick it sounded. One horrid yell Jinks uttered, then he flew into space, spread out like a cross in the air and pitched down to the ragged coral below.

"You beast!" breathed Gytha. "You murderer!"

Flencher stared at her curiously, then laughed.

"You wouldn't have called that little swine a beast if he had slit my throat, eh? You must blame Peter for Jinks' unfortunate end, Gytha. If he hadn't hopped on to Jinks in time, I wouldn't have laid a hand on the little man." His tone changed sharply. "But how come you're both out here at this time o' night?"

"I couldn't sleep, and came out to listen to the ocean," said Gytha sharply. Flencher chuckled.

"What did the ocean have to say to

you that I couldn't say better?" He looked Peter in the eyes. "You saved me a cut, if not worse, Peter. Thanks for that. But don't trade on it. I'll be all the ocean Gytha wants to listen to. Better turn in, both of you. Night air's bad for you."

"You're a cold devil, Peruvio. I almost wish I'd been too late," Peter said angrily, dabbing at his neck.

Peruvio waved him inside and spat.

CHAPTER XVII

OUT OF THE SKY

PETER was making some experiments with various food plants on the veranda, and the old lady played with her rag doll. She stole Peter's plants to make adornments for the ugly toy, and Peter had learned enough to let her amuse herself. He had brought several useless bits of vegetation, pretty enough to attract her, and as soon as he appeared to be more interested in these than in the ones he was working with, she chose them. She was happy, and so was Peter.

Over on the islet the lime kiln was about ready. It was to be fired that afternoon, and all the men were busy clearing away the bush near to the structure. Gytha was in the clearing behind the house, with some books Peruvio had found for her; and to her amazement she found them attractive. She could never cease wondering at the man's many sided nature. There were books, and pictures too, in the room she had been given, which plainly indicated that a woman of a very different sort had been prepared for. She had cleared them out, and put them quietly in his room, saying nothing about them; and he had afterward brought her the books she now examined.

There were novels, all of quality; books of reference, volumes of scientific bent, and well done travel books, all bearing his signature, all showing evidence of having been well read. Most of them were mildewed, and roaches had eaten away the paste of the bindings, but that was to be expected in the Islands.

She found a shady seat on a knoll of crab grass under a *gru-gru* palm, and reveled in the first real treat of literature she had been privileged to enjoy since leaving Suva. Now and then she glanced across at the islet. The kiln stood on a rocky rise, a distinctive structure; and the men working about it moved with seaman-like agility, as if they had become reconciled to their work. She saw Maxon, directing the job as if he had a personal interest in it. There was no disputing the fact that Flencher's Island showed promise.

She could see tremendous merit in what had been done. Already the natives, brown and black, had adopted their new home; they were happy, well fed and cared for, and whether fishing, farming or making thatch, their pleasant voices made music in the island. She shuddered at the memory of that dark anchorage from which they were stolen; but she could not say truthfully that they had suffered much. She had seen too much of natives left alone to feel sorry for these. Yet she did wish that the experiment had been carried out with other motives.

When she thought of that madwoman, with her silver hair, her sweet smile and her fiendish cruelty, she bit her lip and quivered. But the books swiftly transported her to another world. The island was very beautiful that day.

There was nobody in sight immediately about the house when Peruvio and two blacks appeared over the edge of the cliff and entered by his window. The very window into which poor Jovial Jinks had almost stepped. The blacks carried by the handles a small, square, metal chest, bearing traces of soil. It seemed to be no more than a man's fair burden, and they set it down in his room softly.

Presently, after perhaps ten minutes, Peruvio stepped outside again. He stood gazing across at the islet. Maxon,

in the course of his labors, turned and saw him, and immediately disappeared. Flencher laughed softly. He called the blacks, and they brought out the chest and returned with it over the cliff edge. Flencher stood above them, one letting the other down on a rope, then lowering the chest to him. When finished, the blacks went away to draw the fish traps in the lagoon, and Flencher entered the veranda. The old woman lay in the hammock, cuddling her doll, which was dressed up with leaves like a bacchante. She was sleeping like a babe. He motioned to Peter.

"Take that damned truck outside and don't disturb her!" he said hoarsely, and crept in to kick out all the specimens Peter had carefully sorted.

"I thought you wanted me to do this work," grumbled Peter at a distance from the house. "Why else did you carry me off?"

"I did, and you'll do it. Find some other place, where you won't be a nuisance," said Flencher.

The kiln was fired. The flames leaped up from the dry kindling; then settled down into a steady fierce fire when the hardwood caught. A tremendous column of smoke arose for awhile, then that, too, dwindled. Flencher sent over two bottles of rum to celebrate the event, and stood at the cliff brink watching the men capering about the flames like lads at a bonfire. The crackling of the flames was like a mass of dry sticks under a crusher; it attracted Gytha from her books. She stood beside Flencher, gazing in fascination at the islet, watching the long, black serpent of smoke level out in the gentle breeze and go rolling across the ocean. She had a leaping hope that it might be seen, and Flencher guessed her thought. He chuckled, pinched her arm and said:

"Not a chance of what you're hoping, my girl. Vessels don't come this way. Nothing for them to come for, and there's no island within many days' sail where anybody needs to go. I believe you still look upon me as a simple fool. Come now, Gytha, 'fess up!"

"Not a fool," she said quietly. "Perhaps overconfident. I refuse to give up hope."

"I wish you would," he replied gloomily. "Not give up hope. That's a harsh way to put it. I wish you'd reconcile yourself to living here." A red spear of flame leaped to the skies, and it was reflected in his eyes turned upon her, meeting hers. "You might as well, anyhow."

LATE in the afternoon Gytha and Peter were working together in the house garden, selecting flowers for the veranda and the rooms. With such prodigality of blooms, Gytha could indulge her taste for beauty to the full; and she found Peter's genius for all growing things a valuable aid. The old woman played with the discarded flowers, scattering the petals everywhere, pulling them apart with as much glee as she would dismember a lizard or pluck a living bird.

The crackle of the kiln was muted now. Only occasionally did a burst of sparks and a crash of new kindling break the drowsy hum of a hot afternoon. By night the kiln would be burning steadily, a bed of red coals.

A different note came into the drowsy hum, an unfamiliar note. It filled the air. It was not insects, or men, or burning wood. Peter glanced at Gytha. She was scanning the skies. She met his look, and together they stood up, gripping hands, searching the blue with such a thrill of hope having charge of them that for a moment neither dared voice that hope. Then—

"Can it be a plane?" breathed Gytha, and her hand, locked in his, gripped him fiercely.

"Don't say it!" he whispered. "But it must be! Nothing else makes just that sound."

They strained their eyes.

A tiny speck appeared against the blue. It flashed in the sun. It was head-

ing for the island, traveling fast. Then Flencher appeared, scowling, looking around for the increasing and unusual noise. He saw them gazing, followed their gaze and saw. The old woman ran out, looked around like a bird and saw it too. She flung up her hands and made gleeful sounds like a baby. But Flencher flung her aside roughly.

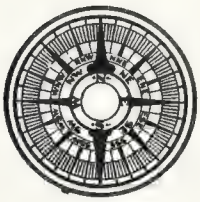
"May the lightning strike them!" he bellowed. "Is a man to know no peace even in mid-ocean?"

The raving man dashed into the house and came out with a powerful rifle. He fired shot after shot at the plane, which was far beyond his range.

As he fired he ran, until he stood on the cliff edge. The plane swerved, made a circle, came lower. There was no indication that it meant to land; it was taking a look. It circled twice, and a figure leaned from it, scanning the island and islet through glasses. Peter and Gytha were no longer afraid of Peruvio. They were too excited. They ran to join him. He was staring at the kiln, around which the men stood grouped, shouting and waving their arms. A one eyed seaman, who had deserted from the navy years ago, stood apart from the others on a high rock. There was method in his arm waving.

"He's signaling!" cried Gytha, and clapped a hand to her mouth in sudden confusion.

Flencher cursed. He had paid little attention to the men's antics until Gytha uttered that ominous word. Now he knelt, sighted and fired again—but not at the plane.



TO BE CONCLUDED

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A READER poses, in connection with A. DeHerries Smith's story, "North Bounty", an interesting question regarding the presence of wolf strain in the sled dogs of the Far North:

Chelan, Washington

In looking over Camp-fire I read a note from A. DeHerries Smith containing his version of the husky dog. Just a short time ago I finished a book by Hudson Stuck, D.D., F.R.G.S., Episcopal Archdeacon of Alaska, entitled "Ten Thousand Miles by Dog Sled." This is a chronicle of his trips in Alaska in connection with his visits to the various missions under his supervision. Page 295, Chapter XIV, is devoted to a description of the sled dogs in Alaska. His statements do not seem to coincide with the ideas of Smith as to origin of the sled dogs. Following is what he says on the subject. I quote verbatim from pages and chapter above mentioned:

"Here it might be worthwhile to say a few words about the general belief that dogs in Alaska are interbred with wolves. That the dog and the wolf have a common origin, there can be no doubt, and that they will interbreed is equally sure. But, diligent inquiry on the part of the writer for a number of years throughout all interior Alaska, amongst whites and natives, has failed to educe one authentic instance of international breeding; has failed to discover one man who knows of his own knowledge that any living dog is the offspring of such union.

While, therefore, it is not here stated that such cross-breeding has not taken place, yet the author is satisfied that it is a very rare thing indeed and that the common stories of dogs that are 'half-wolf' are fabulous."

Quoting some more.

"The Malamute is the Esquimaux dog. 'Siwash' for want of better name is the Indian dog."

"Hudson's Bay voyageurs bred some selected strains of imported dogs with the Indian dog of these parts; or else did no more than carefully select the best individuals of the native species

and bred from them exclusively—it is variously stated—and that is the accepted origin of the husky."

—CHARLES HARRINGTON

Here is Mr. Smith's reply to the above:

Edmonton, Canada

I agree with you that Archdeacon Stuck is an authority and certainly knows what he is writing about. As his book shows, he has done much traveling in the Far North and is well equipped to deal with the subject. In spite of this, I am still of the opinion that the wolf and the husky have much in common, that they mate and that the genuine husky has much wolf blood in his veins.

Although I have been in Alaska and the Yukon several times, I do not claim to be an authority regarding that portion of the continent, and no doubt what Archdeacon Stuck says about the Alaskan husky (or malamute) is entirely correct. However, the yarn in question dealt with the dogs used on the Canadian side, and I was particular to place the scene in the Barren Lands, North of Lake Athabasca, for the reason that the Indians there are pretty well removed from civilization and hunt in a territory which is overrun with wolf packs.

THE following is a quotation from an article entitled "No Union Hours in a Dog's Life" in the *Canadian Forest* by Reece H. Hague, who is an authority on the Canadian husky:

"Some of the best racing dogs the north has produced have been of uncertain and extremely mixed parentage, but in all of them the wolf strain is apparent in some greater or lesser degree. A dog which may bear no resemblance in appearance to his wolf forebears sometimes has the typical wolf howl, and tries in vain to bark like the domestic dog. Other animals which are almost the facsimile of a timber wolf in looks, are probably several generations removed from wolf ancestry."

Harwood Steele, writing in the ninth annual *Scarlet and Gold,* the official magazine of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, deals with the matter of husky dog and wolf interbreeding in an article on "Okemow, the Ace of Huskies"; a true story. Mr. Steele is an Arctic traveler of note; he has written a number of books dealing with the Far North, and it is generally conceded in Canada that he is an authority in all that pertains to the snow country. In characterizing Okemow he writes: ". . . For the rest he had inherited the courage and determination of his dog-mother, with her gentleness as his normal disposition—this last trait not often found in huskies—and the endurance and speed of his wolf-father, with a store of wolf ferocity to be used on occasion . . ."

A friend of mine here, who ran a trading post on Lake Athabasca for a number of years, bears out what I said about the similarity of wolves and genuine huskies. He has purchased many thousand dollars worth of furs in his time and gives it as his opinion that it would be very hard to tell the difference between the two skins.

—A. DEHERRIES SMITH

AND to corroborate the above evidence, the author sends on these two clippings from the *Edmonton Bulletin:*

POLICE DOG OBEYS "CALL OF THE WILD"

With the catching last month of a German police dog in a wolf trap far back in the Little Smoky River country, John Fandrick, veteran trapper, unwittingly wrote "finis" to an actual enactment of Jack London's famous story, "The Call of the Wild."

John Hackett, Fandrick's partner, brought the story into Edmonton Tuesday when he arrived with a big collection of wolf, fox, mink and lynx furs. Both Hackett and Fandrick are positive the animal caught was a genuine German police dog and not a wolf. It had, however, been running with wolves for at least a year.

Hackett points out that the call of the wolf pack has a peculiarly irresistible appeal for the police dog since its ancestors were wolves only a comparatively few generations ago. He believes that the animal caught by his partner left its owner at some of the settlements along the C.N.R. between Edmonton and Jasper and worked back into the Little Smoky country. It was a female and had mated with a wolf.

Hackett is now outfitting at the Empire exchange here for a return trip to his trap line.

SETS TRAPS FOR WOLVES; MAKES OUTSTANDING CATCH OF HUSKY DOG

SAULT STE. MARIE, Ont., Dec. 23.—Tim Muldoon of Echo river set three traps for wolves, and caught a whopper, eight feet long and weighing 175 pounds. So hefty and strong was the animal that it pulled a 50-pound drag a mile through the bush. Muldoon located it, killed it with a club, and exhibited the pelt. Monday it developed that he had trapped a husky dog belonging to his friend, Bill White. The huge animal was known all over the area.

QUOTING a bit from a letter from Edgar Young, of Ask Adventure:

Orlando, Florida

. . . A fellow wrote me a few years back that he had the head of Pancho Villa, preserved in alco-

hol, in a safe place in El Paso, Texas. He was wanting to know if I knew of any one who would pay a handsome price for it. It seems that the Jiveros are not the only head-hunters in the world! I would, myself, like to get hold of a Jivero dried head but the laws up here are so strict that I doubt a man could get one in and manage to keep it. While in Ecuador, I met Jack London and his wife who were returning from the cruise of the *Snark* on a coal boat. I helped him get two, but he had to surrender them in New York to a museum, and barely escaped trouble about them. I have recently seen them on exhibit in New York. You know the Jiveros only shrink the scalp and face as they remove the bones. I wrote this up once for a magazine (*World Traveler*) and it caused some little comment. Almost every one says they shrink the skull but they don't do it, and you will see after you study a head that there is no bone in it. . . .

—EDGAR YOUNG

IN CONNECTION with his novelette, "Some Who Served", in this issue, Hugh Pendexter gives us a bit of the historical background on which he based his narrative:

Norway, Maine

The ringleader of the so-called Hickey plot was Thomas Hickey. He was one of Washington's lifeguards. Greater care was exercised thereafter in the selection of those for the commander's bodyguard. If Hickey had not fallen in love with "Black" Sam Fraunces' pretty daughter, and imparted to her the details of the plot, America's history would read much differently today. When the poisoned peas were removed, Hickey knew he was discovered.

Washington's plight is exaggerated none in the story. Out of a possible 17,225 men, 6,711 were detached, on furlough or sick. The remaining 10,514 were poorly clothed, inadequately armed, and were without military discipline and experience. What artillery they possessed was old, of various calibers and patterns. According to the British General Clinton, General Howe's army numbered 31,625, with 24,464 fit for duty and equal to any army in Europe. It was the beginning of the struggle for the Hudson, with an army of Canada to cooperate. Some 20,000 British veterans, with forty cannon, were opposed by less than 8,000 Americans, most of whom were raw militia, poorly armed and ignorant of war. None in the army had had more than one year's experience. About one half of these were outside the Brooklyn earthworks to meet as large and efficient army as ever landed in America. General Putnam, in command, has been much censured by historians for neglecting to guard the Jamaica road. Once this oversight was discovered, it is no exaggeration to say, the battle was won before a shot was fired.

TO ANY military observer, Washington's position was quite hopeless. To protect New York he must hold King's Bridge, Governor's Island, Paulus Hook and the Heights of Brooklyn, with some of these posts fifteen miles apart, and all separated by water. And all this to be done with the inadequate and untrained and poorly armed forces noted above. Washington's fixed purpose was "to obey implicitly the orders of Congress with a scrupulous exactness." Jay was for laying Long Island waste, burning New York, and a retreat to the fastnesses of the Highlands. Congress was opposed to surrendering "a foot" until compelled. At this, the second year of the war, Washington had not a major-general upon whose judgment he could fully rely. Trumbull of Connecticut wrote, in part " . . . trusting Heaven will support us, I do not greatly dread what they can do against us." Washington replied, in part, "To trust altogether in the justice of our cause, without our own utmost exertions, would be tempting Providence." Greene's illness, although he had not yet developed his great capacity, was a catastrophe.

Putnam knew early in the morning that the enemy, infantry and cavalry, was advancing over the unprotected Jamaica road. He neglected to notify Washington of this danger; nor did he warn Stirling to retreat.

THE head of the British army under Clinton was guided by Tory farmers. Not more than 4,000 raw American troops were beset "by the largest British army which appeared in the field during the war." So writes Historian Bancroft. Washington, watching the unequal struggle from the American lines, exclaimed: "My God! What brave men must I lose this day!" For forty-eight hours he was in the saddle.

The day following the battle, Wednesday, was cold and cloudy. It rained heavily in the afternoon. Men in the American works stood up to their waists in water, in places. Raw pork and bread was the American ration that day. Howe disliked to forego his personal comforts. Thursday morning the British broke ground within six hundred yards of Fort Greene, intending to force the lines by regular approaches. A channel half a mile broad, swept by swift tides, separated the Americans from New York. The game was bagged. Not even Washington's aids knew that their commander, through Mifflin, had ordered Heath at King's Bridge, to forward every boat fit for ferrying the troops across to New York.

After dark the army was ordered to prepare to attack the enemy. Thus the soldiers knew nothing of their leader's plan. Fog rolled in. General Howe, fond of the table, ate over-much and over-

slept. The fog blanketed Brooklyn and the East river, but did not extend to New York. Washington, at the ferry stairs, crossed in the last boat. By seven o'clock that morning the entire army had emerged from the fog and had landed on Manhattan. They took with them all stores and artillery. In less time than Howe wasted in moving thirty miles to overtake the American army at White Plains, Von Moltke conquered Austria.

—HUGH PENDEXTER

A FEW more words on catching pompano:

Northport, Long Island

In answer to C. E. Gregory about pompano: Pompano are caught with rods and reels, also with nets, and in fact they are the easiest fish to catch. Pompano fishing is a regular pastime around Palm Beach in the winter months. We use sand-fleas; sometimes we get them with shrimp, but fleas are so handy. We use a 5/0 hook, 12-thread line, heart-shape sinker about 4 oz.; wire leader looped around top of sinker; about 1 foot of wire stuck on each side, a hook on each end reel, with about 100 feet of line. Any kind of rod. I use bamboo, cast from shore where the water is not too deep, when the tide is almost high.

After casting, plant your rod firmly in the sand and wait. When you get a fish, your rod will tell you. I have seen a lot of smart ones who try to hook their fish, but more than often they hook everything except a pompano. I am of the waiting kind and do so well they ran up to 5 and 6 lbs. last year. One was caught with line tipping the scale at 13 lbs., but give me a 4-pounder any time. There is another fish who looks like a pompano, also very delicious but smaller. They call this the pompanette. —R. CLUZELLE

ONE of the comrades sends in this graphic description of a sea-cow hunt engineered by some Florida swamp rats:

Ten Thousand Islands, Florida.

Draw closer to the Camp-fire, boys, and I'll tell you about manatee hunting in these waters. I might as well, for it don't sound like I'll get much sleep with all this noise hereabouts.

Talk about the quiet of the country! Get closer so you can hear above the everlasting frogs that are dang nigh as big as bulldogs and got lungs like a bloodhound. Not to mention the roaring of 'gators, squawking of bitterns, showering mullet, crashing porpoises, splashing tarpon, whooshing loggerheads and the whanging flight of ducks. Say, them new-fangled taxi horns they got over in Key West never made me jump like those big owls do when they scream so close.

Well anyway, to get back to the manatees: This big animal, once so common that they named rivers after 'em, is found in very few places in the State, and one of 'em is right here; but we ain't going to shoot any this trip because there is a very heavy penalty and we ain't far enough upstream. Before Prohibition, most of the old settlers on the keys used to shoot manatees for a summer's meat supply. They acknowledged only two laws, to wit: the law of self-preservation, and the one about "Do unto others" only do it first, for the Devil takes the hindmost. Since Prohibition, most of these people that used to live by hunting, fishing, trapping, killing plume birds an' such have suddenly got money, and eat canned vittles from the store, and don't even kill plumed birds any more.

I'LL spare you all the agonizing details of starting the hunt, such as getting the home-made family fishboat to run, getting the stepladder family aboard, and we'll say that the old converted sponger's one-lung engine is *kachugging* up the first big river after passing Northwest Cape. I don't need to tell you about the interesting life that churns those tanin-red waters, for yesterday we saw the sharks, barracudas, porpoises, tarpon, mullet, loggerhead turtles and all the rest when we came through one of the thousands of rivers.

The hunting party takes the boat upstream almost to Whitewater Bay and then turns north. When the openings get too small and the bars too shallow for the fishboat—for the water is like the links of a chain, a series of connected ponds with keys in the middle—the men take to the flimsy glade boats and pole their way. All are well liquored by this time, and most acrimonious drunken arguments ensue about the proper twists and turns of the channels to follow. I would personally swear that they never found the same bays twice. No one could without very definite blazing.

The towering mangroves have been left behind; the water is shallow and clear.

THE first two manatees sighted are lone bulls, who take alarm at the noisy approach and escape. They are unhurt by the long range shots from guns that have long been smooth-bore from standing uncleaned for years in shacks not one hundred feet from the warm salt waters of Florida Bay. It is a fine tribute to the metal of the old .38-40's and .45-70 single shots that they kill any game at all and not the shooter.

After the second manatee eludes the hunters, the boys quiet down and throw the garrulous old man in the water until he is half drowned and sober. Filial or family obedience or affection are merely others of the senseless laws that are observed in the breach in this truly "Gawd fohsaken" wilderness.

AS THE first boat steals around a key, the man in the bow sights a cow and calf manatee feeding on the water-grass a scant hundred feet away. He is an uncanny shot with the old .45-70, and is not as drunk as the others. Let me explain here that a head shot alone will kill the beasts, for their immense bulk is heavily padded with rubbery skin and blubber. The first shot clips off the end of her small nose, the only part that she had exposed. Off in a flash, with the calf behind her, she makes a surging wake like a submarine.

After an unbelievably long time the cow sticks the bloody stump of her nose above the surface for air, and the hunter clips off another chunk. This process is repeated, and don't think that the men in the boat aren't sweating blood to keep her in sight; until she enters a pond with only one exit. Her dives grow shorter and shorter as she circles the pool, leaving a bloody froth behind her, until a little of her head finally shows above water and a big slug finds her tiny brain.

With the cow dead, the hunters make short work of murdering the calf.

THIS sportsmanlike gesture concluded, they prepare to get drunk in a serious way. One of the younger boys is sent back to the fishboat, guided by machete blazes and signal shots, to summon the womenfolk. The men of the outfit have done their work and will have a well earned souse while the women and children are engaged in the insignificant detail of butchering the huge animals, getting the meat to the boat and packing it in molasses barrels of brine. The manatees are so large that they can not be hauled ashore until chopped into sections with an ax. What portion of the cow they have no room for is left to the buzzards and crabs.

The meat is crisp and tender; so far superior to Florida beef that it is no wonder the poor brutes are all but exterminated. In brine the flesh keeps literally for years, and tastes something like pork chops without the grease, if you can imagine that.

THE natives who slaughter these herbivorous submarines take particular delight in feeding the meat to revenuers, Audubons, game wardens and such, on their very infrequent visits. The officers never fail to remark the delicious home-grown pork and never seem to recognize the unmistakable twisted rib bones that litter the yard. Maybe they are glad to get the delicious meat instead of the everlasting "conch" diet of "grits and grunts", for the grunts often retreat to deep water ahead of a storm and can't be caught, and the grits are cooked without sifting out the fat white worms.

—R. L. BACON

OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The spirit of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Scurvy

LONG before the day of biochemists, the Indians of Canada had discovered that a decoction of bark and water was a preventive of scurvy. They taught the trick to Jacques Cartier in 1735.

Request:—"What is this disease called scurvy? What causes it? How does it act? Is it fatal? Is there a cure for it? There will possibly be four in the party which I am getting together for an Arctic trip."

—HOLGER E. LINDGREN, Olympia, Washington

Reply, by Dr. Claude P. Fordyce:—I have delayed answering your letter as there were some new facts on vitamins I wanted to get. They are based on some researches which have recently been announced.

Dr. E. V. McCollum of the department of biochemistry of Johns Hopkins University is the foremost nutrition expert in the country. He wrote me as follows:

"In order to provide the vitamin C for men who will be a long way from the base camp, I would suggest that a quantity of seed wheat be taken along. This can be sprouted at any time by soaking for a few hours in water, then wrapping in a cloth and keeping at approximately room temperature or a little cooler. As soon as the sprouts are out the grains have a high antiscorbutic value. Explorers in regions where trees are available can always make a decoction of inner bark, or the needles of evergreens, in water, which can be taken without heating. This was known to the Indians of Canada and taught to Jacques Cartier in 1735.

"Canned fruits and vegetables put up by the modern vacuum process in which the air is largely removed by a reduction of pressure and the remainder by a blast of steam are nearly the equivalent of fresh articles in their vitamin C content. However, these are so water-rich that they do not lend themselves to inclusion in the list of provisions for an Arctic exploration trip where the men would get far away from the base of supplies. I would suggest that an abundant supply of canned tomatoes be taken along and that these be secured with the advice of Dr. Edward F. Kohman, National Canners Research Laboratories, Washington, D. C, who will assure you of the quality of the batch taken along."

I AM advised also by the research laboratories of the Borden Company as follows: "Commander Byrd took a quantity of our powdered lemon juice on his Antarctic Expedition as one of his sources of antiscorbutic vitamin C." They claim that their powdered milk also contains vitamin C. Their lemon juice with corn syrup (powdered) should be used on all trips where scurvy is likely to be encountered. I understand that also the California Fruit Growers Exchange markets a powdered lemon and an orange juice, and a syrup concentrate of lemon juice (8 to 1). Pure concentrated vitamin C has been made by Dr. C. G. King of the University of Pittsburgh, but is not yet marketed.

You ask also: What is this disease called scurvy? What causes it? How does it act? Is it fatal? Is there a cure for it?

Scurvy is caused by a deprivation of fresh meat and vegetables and essential vitamins contained therein. In the first stage there is weakness, pallor, drawn appearance of the face and sometimes swelling of the ankles so that pressure with a finger

leaves a dent, and it may be noticed that every little knock leaves a bruise. Later stage—shortness of breath, faintness, swelling of the gums without ulceration, very foul breath, appearance of red or purple spots on the skin. These spots are due to bleeding into the skin and in very severe cases the skin comes off and leaves ulcers. There may be bleeding from the digestive tract or internal organs, so that blood may appear in the excretions.

Rapid improvement and recovery usually follow the use of the right foods with plenty of vitamin C content. The experts who wrote the section on medicine in the Harvard Handbook of Travel state that "to treat scurvy eat fresh vegetables or drink the juice of fresh meat, or take fresh milk or eat sauerkraut or dried vegetables. Lemonade from fresh lemons is very good. Preserved lime juice is good, but when kept long may decompose. Avoid damp and unhygienic surroundings." Dr. McCollum's opinions are best to follow as they represent the last word in the matter.

Sheepherder

DESERTION of the flock is a prison offense.

Request:—"Could you tell just what are the duties of a sheepherder in the Southwest, especially in New Mexico? Is experience necessary? What is the usual pay? What do you think of my chances of obtaining a job as one if I went there in the proper season?"

—CHARLES DABOLL, Lockport, New York

Reply, by Mr. H. F. Robinson:—A sheepherder is put in charge of a flock of sheep—maybe as many as 3000 or 4000, but usually less. You would be given a couple of good dogs, a little tent about 6 feet square, a few cooking utensils and a small supply of food. You will take the sheep out on the range owned or controlled by the sheep owner and stay with them night and day. They will range all day and you keep with them, on foot, and at night herd them back to the bedding ground, which will be where your tent is pitched, get them quieted and watch over them in the night so that they do not stampede or that coyotes or other "varmints" do not get them.

If water is handy, you see that they get to it once a day; if some distance away, every other day and on occasions perhaps even every third day if there is any moisture or snow on the ground.

Once a week, or some such interval, some one will come out with food for the next week and perhaps help you move your little camp a few miles.

There is a very strict law by which one placed in charge of sheep and abandoning them is fined heavily or suffers up to 90 days in jail, or perhaps both. You would get in off the range once in several months perhaps. At most all other times you would be alone with your flock and dogs.

For this you might get about $60 a month and food. Very few Americans act as sheepherders. It is usually left to the Mexican, or native Indian, population.

Army

WHAT to wear on dress occasions.

Request:—"1. Are dress boots worn with the new Army blue dress uniform, or are slacks supposed to be worn with blue?

2. Is it permissible to wear a leather saber sling in preference to the chain?

3. Is the Service pistol ever worn for dress at the same time as the saber?"

—R. E. MCCARTHY, St. Louis, Missouri

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—1. Dress boots are not being worn with the dress uniform at present. In the regular Army the dress uniform is now worn only on social occasions, off duty, and not at formations.

2. Leather saber slings are still permissible under the regulations. Saber chains are almost universally worn, however.

3. The pistol and the saber are not worn at the same time. The pistol is not worn with the dress uniform. But the pistol is sometimes worn with the Service uniform on dress occasions, especially at summer camps, etc.

Colombia

GOLD hunting at the headwaters of the Magdalena.

Request:—"1. Do the Colombian mining laws discriminate against foreigners as in Mexico?

2. Is there any tax on prospecting?

3. Are passports necessary?

4. If a sailor jumped a ship there and went prospecting, what would the Colombian law be apt to do to him?

5. Should we use a boat to get around and work the gravel along the streams, or would it be better to travel across country?

6. What would be the probable price of a boat? Of a burro?

7. Are the dugouts one sees around Cartagena the proper kind of boat for this purpose?

8. What parts of Colombia offer the best field for gold prospecting?

9. What would be the best part to go to to reach these places?

10. We understand they allow no firearms over .38 caliber. Is that correct?

11. Would sidearms be sufficient, or should we take rifles also?

12. What models would be the easiest to get shells for?

13. What kinds of animal life would be apt to give us the most trouble, and are there any special precautions to be taken against them?

14. What kinds of game could we expect to find?"

—G. H. BAIRD, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—1. Theoretically the Colombian mining laws are supposed to give foreigners an equal right with natives, but actually the native has a bit the best of it, which is perhaps natural. You can see a copy of the full mining code in your public library in a book called "Mining Laws of the World", also in another book published by the Pan-American Union called "Mining Laws of Latin America", which is sold by that society at Washington. You can get principal excerpts of the laws by writing to the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce at Washington.

2. There is a small tax on prospecting, which is scarcely ever paid. It amounts to about $2.50 our money.

3. I think you will have to have an American passport before you can buy passage on a ship from here. They are obtained from the Secretary of State, Washington, D. C, and the fee is $10. They will send you an application and the details on request. You can get a seaman's passport free from the shipping board in New York, and this would answer.

4. Nothing. It is up to the ship and they don't do anything about it after they sail. It is a matter of keeping out of ship's sight until they sail.

5. Better to travel across country, for the streams are swift up in the gold region.

6. Depends. A good *cayuca* or dugout is worth about $10 our money. Burros are worth $10 to $12 and good mules are from $60 to $100 each as they are used much locally for packing.

7. Yes, but don't use a boat.

8. Headwater of the Magdalena River.

9. Go in from Buenaventura, up to end of little railroad and hit the trails on foot or mule-back.

10. Yes, but a .38 is bigger than needed. A repeating .22 would get you all over the country. This with a .410 shotgun and a .38 Colt would arm you more than needed.

11. You could do it without any sort of firearms. Nothing would bother you down there. A .22 is a good table gun for small game and a small shotgun would be fine for fowls.

12. In the cities they import shells, and some of the mining commissaries have them on hand. I found .32 pistol shells rather easy to get in the larger places. For small guns you could take a full supply.

13. None will bother you.

14. Deer, monkeys, tapirs, local rabbits, giant water rabbits, now and then a small bear, fish and fowls.

Old Man River

FROM Chicago to the Gulf, an easy trip if you have plenty of time.

Request:—"1. I would be very pleased if you would tell me where I could get a good map of the river from Lake Michigan on to the Gulf.

2. Also the best route for a boat 35 feet long and about 4 or 5 foot depth (a sloop).

3. Would it be possible to use a sail, or would one have to use an engine all the way? There is plenty of time.

4. What are the conditions?"

—JAMES ROGERS, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. George A. Zerr:—1. Good maps cost money and, since the route you intend to cover would require more than fifty charts at so much per, the price would amount to quite a bit. However, stop in your U. S. engineer's office, where you may be able to get first hand information.

2. Your best route would be down the Illinois River, and you ought to have plenty of water at this time of the year to reach the Mississippi, for that kind of boat.

3. I'm not so sure about carrying a sail, since there are too many bends in the rivers. An outboard engine would suit your purpose better; or still better, if you have the time, why not oars? Work, yes, but you get there.

4. If you are a Lake sailor, you'll find navigating rivers a different proposition. Your first large town, after leaving the Illinois, would be St. Louis, then the next of any size, Cairo. From the mouth of the Ohio on down, towns are farther apart. At St. Louis, run up to the U. S. Lighthouse Inspection Service and ask for a lighthouse aid book on the lower Mississippi River. It costs only a few cents, and will give you all the information needed as to names of towns and distances.

Wolf

SAFE as a dog, if he's raised right.

Request:—"Can a regular wolf, not a coyote, become a good dog? That is, if I can secure a puppy wolf and raise it, would it make a satisfactory companion for one who does quite a bit of hiking, camping and amateur exploring? Or how about a mixture of one-half wolf and one-half police?"

—LA RUE, Pt. Townsend, Washington

Reply, by Mr. John B. Thompson:—A wolf occasionally makes a good pet such as you wish. If you will raise it properly (or a mixed breed) and let no one tease it while young, it will be safe as any other dog. A good deal, however, depends upon environment. You can not tell which

side of a strain a mixed breed will take after. Full grown males such as you describe run from 40 to 85 pounds. Sometimes they are larger.

Baseball

OFFICIAL rules and strategy.

Request:—"There are a couple of baseball problems which I wish you would straighten out for me. The first has to do with the official rules; the second with strategy.

1. What action should the umpire take when there are men on first and second base, and an infield fly is hit?

2. Does a situation ever arise when it is good baseball for an outfielder to fail to make a catch of a ball hit into his territory?"

—JOE STIRN, Cleveland, Ohio

Reply, by Mr. Frederick G. Lieb:—1. With first and second bases occupied and a high fly hit over the infield, the umpire should call: "Out on infield fly," while ball still is in the air.

However, if the ball is close enough to the foul line, he should withhold decision until sure ball will drop fair.

2. Yes, there is a time when an outfielder should deliberately fail to make a catch, but never of a fair fly. With a runner on third base and less than two out in a close game, the outfielder never should catch a long foul, permitting the runner to score after the catch. It is much better to gamble that the next time the batter will ground out, pop up or strike out.

India

MONGOOSE lore in the land of the cobra.

Request:—"Please tell me something of the Indian mongoose. Will it attack any snake except the cobra? Does the mongoose eat the snakes that it kills? Does it invariably kill a snake that it attacks?"

—JOHN L. SULLIVAN, Meridian, Mississippi

Reply, by Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—The mongoose belongs to the family of the Ichneumons; it attains the size of a cat and is of gray color. This refers to the Indian mongoose. Another species, named the banded mongoose, inhabits Africa.

The Indian species is famous as the destroyer of that most deadly of snakes, the cobra, and combats between it and the reptile almost invariably result in the death of the latter. I have seen the mongoose attack on sight any snake that crosses its path and am inclined to think that it is the hereditary enemy of every snake, no matter of what sort or kind. I have, however, never seen a mongoose eat the snake it killed, though it may have done so after I left. Some of the observers think that its fur protects it against the snake bite; others that it may be bitten, but that, by eating some herb, it counteracts the effects of the poison; still others believe that its incredible agility enables it to keep out of harm's way and dispatch the snake before the latter has time to bite.

Game

DEER and birds near White Sulphur Springs.

Request:—"Is it possible to get all of the following within auto distance of White Sulphur Springs: Deer, turkey, pheasants, grouse?"

—JAMES W. DOONER, Brooklyn, New York

Reply, by Mr. Lawrence Edmund Allen:—All of the game you mention is available within motoring distance of White Sulphur Springs.

A large number of deer were killed last year in the vicinity of Neola, Greenbrier County, 31 miles west of White Sulphur. Turkeys are found in Pocahontas County in the vicinity of Marlinton, Cass and Durbin, also short distances from White Sulphur.

Pheasant and grouse hunting is at its best in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties, around Charlestown, in the northern part of the State, although some pheasants are found in Pocahontas County, not far from White Sulphur.

Nitroglycerin

IF TWO tons of the stuff were shot at with a long range rifle the marksman would be lucky if he lived to tell the tale.

Request:—"1. How much nitro is used when blowing in an oil well?

2. If we were to blow up a wreck and, in order to do a thorough job, we used 2 tons of dynamite 90%, how much nitro would it take to do the same work?"—RUSSELL HERRICK, New York City

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—1. The amount of nitroglycerin used in any given oil well varies with depth of well and character of ground found by means of cores taken from above oil sands. Maybe a half dozen units will turn the trick; if not, another charge is exploded. Each unit is a long metal cylinder which just fits inside the well casing. They are lowered to the bottom of the hole, and exploded by a go-devil dropped upon them. Each unit contains around a quart of nitroglycerin.

2. Dynamite is simply pure nitroglycerin mixed with some carrier, such as sawdust, certain clays, etc., to facilitate transportation to place of use and also to bring it inside the legal requirements

for "permissible" explosive: i. e. permissible for transportation. I've never seen any 90% dynamite, nor do I think it is manufactured so pure. Workers would be afraid to handle it. Permissible dynamite runs to a maximum of 60%, no higher; and 60% is as high as I have used in many years of handling it in car load lots. Have heard of 80%, but doubted its existence. 90% dynamite would be practically the pure quill, anyhow.

The destructive force exerted by either a 90% dynamite, or pure nitroglycerin, would be so similar that the difference would be negligible, so slight as not to be estimated. In passing—the only way you could explode 2 tons of nitroglycerin and escape, would be to shoot at it with a rifle at long range and it is doubtful even then if you'd get by. At least, you'd not take it standing up, and it's a cinch you would never forget your experience.

Nitroglycerin is no stuff to fool with, unless you are an expert. Well shooters are short lived, as a rule.

An Ask Adventure section on the increasingly popular sport of Wrestling is under consideration. Readers who feel that they are fully qualified to serve as expert on this subject are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure*, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

Note: Africa Part 7 (Sierra Leone to Old Calabar) is now covered by Mr. N. E. Nelson, Firestone Plantations Company, Akron, Ohio.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 536 Park St., Chicago, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, New Jersey.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago. Ill.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes: wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons *pole arms and armor.*—CAPT. ROBERT E. GARDNER, High-Seventh Armory, Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D. Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercises, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Camping and Woodcraft PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tennessee.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting; development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystallography, color and chemical composition.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration work, advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman, rate clerk, General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery: tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R. (Retired), 442 Forty-ninth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 541 No. Harper Ave., Hollywood, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1006 E. 10th St., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Ornithology *General information on birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

★**Linguistics and Ethnology** *(a) Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology. (b) Languages and the problems of race migration. (c) Individual languages and language families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Old Songs that Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON. *Archive of American Folk-Song: Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

✢**Skiing and Snowshoeing** W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The World-Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 455 West 23rd St. New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, addresses of all ocean lines and liners; shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Alexandria, Va.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping: names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of an American documental steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all government owned vessels.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Alexandria, Va.

★**The Sea Part 3** *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans: Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

★**The Sea Part 5** *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean.* (*Siberian Waters.*)—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Quartzsite, Arizona, care of Conner Field.

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross", Suva, Fiji.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States; and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 3 *Anam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin, China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 4** *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn. and DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 7 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Minor** DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Africa Part 1** *Egypt.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT.

Africa Part 2 *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Belgian Congo.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure.*

Africa Part 3 (British) *Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure.*

Africa Part 4 *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, caravan trade and caravan routes.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**Africa Part 5** *Tunis and Algeria.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 6 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 7 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar; West Africa; Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Company, Akron, Ohio.

Africa Part 8 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 9** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe Part 1 *Jugo-Slavia and Greece.*—CAPT. WM. W. JENNA, West Point, New York.

Europe Part 2 *Albania.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, P. O. Box 303, Damariscotta, Maine.

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, P. O. Box 303, Damariscotta, Maine.

Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, London, W. C. 2, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Drive, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

Europe Part 9 *France, Belgium.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 10 *Spain.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 1 *Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

✠**West Indies** *Cuba, Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—E. BRUGUIERE, 10 Gay St., New York City.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States of old Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamanulipas.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

✠**Mexico Part 2** *Southern Lower California.*—C. R. MAHAFFEY, Finca "Flores de Italia", San Juan, Benque, Atlantida, Honduras.

Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and States of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Mexico Part 4 *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading in Canada Part 1, and fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis, St., Quebec, Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Trips for sport and Adventure—big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes and present conditions.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), 44 Huntley St., Toronto, Canada.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, Desoronto, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Road, Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Humers Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

✠**Canada Part 7** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.* C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 8 *The Northw.Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing. THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1015 W. 56th St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 1 *California, Utah and Arizona.* E. E. HARRIMAN, 1832 Arlington Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

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